

PLAYSTATION 3
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DIGITAL
EDITION

HITMAN: ABSOLUTION REVIEW

PLAY



WORLD'S
FIRST REVIEW
PLAYSTATION
ALL STARS
BATTLE ROYALE

ISSUE NO 225
THE ICONS ISSUE

PS4 IN
2013?

Experts reveal why Sony's next
console is coming in 12 months

Future of PlayStation

LITTLEBIGPLANET 3

GOD OF WAR 4 • UNCHARTED 4 • GROUND ZEROES

METAL GEAR
RISING

Hands-on with the vicious
hack-and-slasher

18+
REVIEWS

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED
ASSASSIN'S CREED III
ASSASSIN'S CREED III:
LIBERATION
LBP KARTING
007 LEGENDS
OKAMI HD

LIMITED EDITION



EXCLUSIVE
GUIDES TO:
NI NO KUNI SOUL SACRIFICE
ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES
ARMY OF TWO: THE DEVIL'S CARTEL

4 TO COLLECT



BEST OF



The stiff upper lip. The steely glint in the eye.
The stoutness of heart.

Each of these things made Britain great in the field
of combat; but all the grit, pluck and spunk in the
world is nothing without the hardware to match.

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country has ever produced – including the Churchill, Cromwell,
Crusader, Black Prince, Centurion and Comet – all yours to
command in free to play, team-based, global online tank battles.

REAL MEN PLAY WITH TANKS.



GAMESPOT UK

8/10

"A great, accessible shooter"

inegamers.com

80/100 "If you like RPGs, strategy
or even action games, you'll love this"

BRITISH



PC GAMER

85/100

"A near-perfect populist combat sim"

bitgamer

95/100

"Enough to satisfy
hardcore tankheads"



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LET'S BATTLE

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Because you're dying a lot.



EXCLUSIVELY ON YOUR DISC



BEST FUTURE GAMES ON PS3

We pit GTA V against *The Last Of Us*, *God Of War: Ascension*, *Beyond: Two Souls* and *Ni No Kuni* to determine the most gorgeous PS3 game.

DISHONORED MASTERCLASS

We offer a few tips on how you can become a *Dishonored* master. We still love the game to an unhealthy extent.



PSYGNOSIS RETROSPECTIVE

Now that Studio Liverpool is gone, we fondly reflect on the achievements of Psygnosis, its legendary predecessor.

BIOSHOCK INFINITE

Putting the brand new *BioShock* up against its equally sexy and smart forerunner. Bring on March so we can play the damn thing.



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!

A close-up of Nathan Drake from the Uncharted series, holding a shotgun. He is wearing a brown leather jacket over a yellow shirt and a brown belt with a large gold buckle. The background is a solid blue color.

“Mechanically, Uncharted doesn't necessarily need changes – it needs refinement in aspects like aiming and melee combat, as well as the rhythm of set-pieces”

Future of PlaySta

UNCHARTED 4 WHAT'S THE NEXT PHASE FOR NATHAN DRAKE?

EVERYBODY KNOWS THE score with *Uncharted*: the first one was good, the second one was a blinder, the third one was inconsistent yet great and *Golden Abyss* gave us something to play on the Vita. A great *Uncharted* game hinges on a number of things coming together – the structure of set-pieces, the quality of storytelling and gameplay systems that compliment the two. In an interview for the book *Gamers At Work* by Morgan Ramsay, Naughty Dog's co-founder explained why “When *Uncharted 2* came out, I finally saw the pieces come together and click. *Uncharted 2* was the game Naughty Dog set out to make when we started *Crash*. It took more than a decade to get there.”

When you're coming off that, then, where do you go next? *Uncharted 3* represented an effort to emulate *Uncharted 2*, in some

ways – replace a train sequence with a plane sequence, swap the mountains for the desert, trade blue yeti men for fiery instakill blokes. At this point we're assuming Naughty Dog is working on *Uncharted* for the next generation of consoles, given that job ads are asking for developers to create character models using a million pixels. And hey, would there be any more exciting reveal at E3 2013 for the PS4 than Drake running on Sony's new hardware?

Uncharted 4 needs to step away from the previous games a little bit, especially in terms of story and characters. The dynamic of Elena, Sully and Chloe reached a natural head at the climax of the third instalment – perhaps it's time to examine Drake at a different time in his life, whether as a younger



WHERE ARE THE BIGGEST **PLAYSTATION** FRANCHISES GOING NEXT? LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE HEAVIEST HITTERS, AND EXAMINE HOW THEY SHOULD EVOLVE TO OUR DELIGHT IN THE FUTURE...

tion

treasure hunter or an older one. And hey, the game isn't called 'Nathan Drake' – who's to say that *Uncharted* couldn't have a new protagonist in the offing, maybe with Drake as the Sully archetype? It's characters and story that are at the core of this series, and that'd certainly be one way to re-energise the narrative side of things. Mechanically, *Uncharted* doesn't necessarily need changes – it needs refinement in areas like aiming and melee combat, as well as the rhythm of set pieces (even *Uncharted 2* didn't entirely get this right, losing momentum after the tank-village invasion). We want an *Uncharted 4* to show us a different side of Nathan Drake, to put him in a situation we haven't seen before.



METAL GEAR SOLID: GROUND ZEROES

WHAT SNAKE'S RETURN SIGNALS FOR THE FUTURE OF KOJIMA'S FRANCHISE

WITH **SOLID SNAKE'S** story seemingly over, it's down to Kojima to conclude the downfall of Big Boss from obedient soldier to broken patriot to military leader, all the way down to the villain who comes face-to-face in combat with his son (alright, clone). *Ground Zeroes* will chronicle the battle between Big Boss and the Patriots, pioneering a more open style of play that the series dabbled with in *MGS3*. Frankly, it looks like a next-gen title on current generation hardware, and we're totally okay with that.

GOD OF WAR IV

WHY REINVENTION NEEDS TO BE ON THE AGENDA FOR KRATOS' FUTURE ADVENTURES

WHEN WE POLLED you about *God Of War: Ascension* last month, the number one response we got from you was that the series needed a shot in the arm, creatively – that the formula for any game starring Kratos was so set in stone that it needed to dare playing with the fine mechanics that have got *GOW* to this point. To that, we agree, but reinvention for the venerable hack-and-slasher adventure series arguably has to be more extreme than for any other PlayStation-exclusive franchise out there.

That's due to the fact that *God Of War* essentially exhausted its own lore, with *GOW III* marking the high point in the way Greek mythology was integrated into that game. Perhaps Kratos needs to find some other gods to tangle with – or, maybe, a new character needs to step up and fill that void.

God Of War: Ascension is beyond the natural conclusion of the property for some, but not us. This is still a valuable PlayStation franchise that means a lot to many people, and it could easily thrive on PS4 if given a conceptual overhaul. Those combat fundamentals need to be challenged, perhaps the RPG elements of *God Of War* need to be stepped up – either way, we're far from done with Kratos.

Kratos really needs to find some other gods to tangle with



LITTLEBIGPLANET 3

WHERE DOES SACKBOY GO FROM HERE?

THE OBVIOUS POINT of expansion for *LittleBigPlanet*'s inevitable next instalment will come in the tools offered to players – in the second game we saw a broader array of genres opened up to players, and we'd expect that to expand in its next mainline instalment. There's also the possibility that it could go 3D for the first time, the precedent being set with *Karting* for building pretty complex tracks with relatively simple tools, and the PS4's technology would no doubt offer scope to try such a new paradigm.

Besides, it's the natural end point of any great platformer, to try going into 3D, and there will be some who believe that

LittleBigPlanet has reached the natural highpoint of its formula with the second game and Vita version. But *LittleBigPlanet* has always been about creative potential, and the idea behind the series, that the player can get as much out of the creator tools as they're willing to put in, is still a powerful founding conceit that has acres of potential.

If *LittleBigPlanet Karting* tells us anything about *LittleBigPlanet 3*, it's that Sackboy doesn't have to be tied to any particular genre. We've seen the start of something – but every genre out there is now waiting for a similarly rich Play, Create, Share treatment. Since Media Molecule has stepped away from *LBP*, we're expecting this to be the product of new series overseers Tarsier Studios, who worked on the Vita version.



ROCKSTAR GAMES

THE OPEN WORLD HAS THE MOST TO GAIN FROM PS4...

SCALE, DETAIL AND ATMOSPHERE.

That's why we love Rockstar's open world design, and expect all three to escalate when the PS4 arrives – anticipate *GTA*, *Red Dead* and *LA Noire*'s inevitable follow-ups, as well as one for cult hit *Bully*, too (*Max Payne* is a longer shot after the so-so sales of *MP3*). We imagine the leap between PS3 and PS4 will be as astonishing as the previous jump between generations, offering Rockstar significant ground in the way it portrays

worlds and tells stories, both of which have been high on the company's agenda this generation when we consider the focuses of *Red Dead Redemption* and *GTA IV*. *GTA VI* and *Red Dead 3* (let's hazard a daft guess at the name *Revolution*) will doubtlessly follow this curve. It's also worth bearing in mind that the *Red Dead Redemption* team at Rockstar San Diego is recruiting for developers to work on a next-gen open world title – so something's afoot. Exciting...



NEW EXCLUSIVES

WHAT CAN TOMORROW'S NEW IPS TELL US ABOUT THE FUTURE OF PLAYSTATION?

The Last Of Us represents Naughty Dog's first ambitious attempt to work on two projects simultaneously, with separate teams deployed between that and *Uncharted*. It may surprise you to learn that some other developers are likely to follow suit – this allows Sony studios to maintain existing properties in-house while also potentially creating the next new wave of PlayStation 4 exclusives.

We know that Sony's Santa Monica Studio is working on an open world game of some description, which it was recruiting for some time last year, and that this is likely being headed up by Stig Asmussen, director of *God Of War III*. To us, this sounds like a similar tactic to that employed by Naughty Dog. We can't wait to see what they come up with.

Media Molecule has passed along *LittleBigPlanet* to work on 'brand new IPs' described as 'even more ambitious' than the Sackboy-driven project, described as such on the company's recruitment page. Expect this to maintain the developer's whole mantra of Play, Create, Share – that seems to be its thing.

It's been a long time since we heard of anything from *Killzone* developer Guerrilla Games, too – the rumour going around suggests it's working on a new IP, which is highly likely, since there's been almost a decade of *Killzone* with no break, and that the studio has swelled to 130 members in recent years (and is still recruiting). Expect *Killzone 4* to pop up as well. That'll no doubt showcase the PS4 hardware when the time comes.

And what of *Gran Turismo 6*? Surely too late for this generation of consoles now, expect Polyphony's car porn to return many years in the future. Of course, unlike most of the other games in this feature, *Gran Turismo* is very much a known quantity at this point...

INFAMOUS 3

ELECTRIC DREAMS FOR COLE MCGRATH...

COLE MCGRATH'S FUTURE has to come in world-building and abilities – the open environment of *inFamous 2*'s New Marais was a significant leap over the original's Empire City, and that attempt to create a unique digital locale has to be applied once again in a third instalment (which we're expecting on PS4, at this stage). Sony snapped up *inFamous* developer Sucker Punch last year after the successful release of the second game, and this is a series that clearly has a long way to go in terms of potential.



FALLOUT 4

THE INEVITABLE RETURN OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

REPORTEDLY SET IN Boston (and by reportedly, we mean some student said it), *Fallout 4* is – whatever Bethesda is working on next, pre-production began at least a few months before *Skyrim* was completed. Based on how quick *Oblivion* was in reaching the market this generation, we wouldn't be too surprised if *Fallout 4* cropped up relatively early on in the PS4's lifespan.



WHAT MAKES A PLA

SUPERBOT ENTERTAINMENT'S LEAD DESIGNER PAUL EDWARDS TALKS US THROUGH (ALMOST) ALL THE CHARACTERS YOU

SIR DANIEL FORTESQUE

MEDIEVIL

"Old school PlayStation fans remember the *MediEvil* series for its whimsical protagonist and his charming storyline. *Battle Royale* updates his familiar clumsy movements with high-fidelity animation, without losing that tinge of cartoony charm."

NARIKO

HEAVENLY SWORD

"*Heavenly Sword* was easily one of the most visually impressive video games ever made at the dawn of the PS3 era. *Battle Royale*'s Nariko captures the trademark visual flair of her high-flying dual-blade combat, as well as her elaborate freestyle chain combos."

GOOD/EVIL COLE MCGRATH

INFAMOUS

"Cole can evolve into two completely separate personalities, with their own power sets. That was the driving force behind splitting Cole into two versions in *Battle Royale*, allowing us to represent both his ice powers and fire powers."

DANTE

DEVIL MAY CRY

"*Devil May Cry* absolutely revolutionized the third-person action genre. Our goal was to represent him as an ultra-stylish, advanced combo character for all fans of the *DMC* series to enjoy."

COLONEL RADEC

KILLZONE

"Easily one of the most memorable Sony villains of all time, Radec represents the most iconic aspect of the *Killzone* series – the red-eyed, cold-blooded Helghan soldier."

BIG DADDY

BIOSHOCK

"Big Daddy is definitely the heavy bruiser of *Battle Royale*, charging his way into combat with relative ease. The Big Daddy/Little Sister dynamic is represented in his level one super as well as many of Big Daddy's intros, cut-scenes, and storyline segments."

SLY COOPER

"The modern open-world exploration genre owes a lot to the *Sly Cooper* series. In *Battle Royale*, he's a sneaky trickster who doesn't play it slow like the protagonists of other stealth games. Players who love agility and crafty planning will appreciate what he brings to the roster."

Looking back at Sony's library of first-party games, there's a clear emphasis on creativity, innovation, and quality

TORO INOUE

SONY MASCOT

"When choosing characters, we made it a priority to add as many unique layers of combat as we could possibly fit in – from the straightforward brawler style of Sweet Tooth, to Radec's long-range dominance, to all of Spike's oddball gadgets, to Toro's stance-change craziness!"

SPIKE

APE ESCAPE

"Some [fans] may not realize that the series continued developing on the PlayStation 2. *Battle Royale*'s version of Spike is based on his most recent incarnation, in *Ape Escape: Million Monkeys*."

SACKBOY

LITTLEBIGPLANET

"*LittleBigPlanet* is all about giving players the opportunity to create their own playgrounds and share them with friends. With Sackboy, we wanted to capture that feeling of interacting with levels, creating custom obstacles, and combining moves in unique ways."

PLAYSTATION ALL-STAR

CAN CHOOSE FROM IN BATTLE ROYALE, AND WHY THEY DESERVE A PLACE IN THIS EXPLOSIVE BEAT-'EM-UP...

NATHAN DRAKE UNCHARTED

"As fans of *Uncharted* know, Nathan Drake is a jack-of-all trades who can improvise his way out of any tricky situation. He also has some of the funniest moves in the game mapped to his O button, which is a tribute to how Drake never takes himself too seriously."

HEIHACHI MISHIMA TEKKEN

"Heihachi is one of only six characters to have appeared in all eight *Tekken* instalments. Our goal was to identify the most iconic attacks associated with Heihachi's fighting style, and to represent them faithfully in *Battle Royale*."

RAIDEN METAL GEAR

"The newest instalment of the *Metal Gear* series focuses on Raiden. He's the prototypical futuristic cyborg ninja, so we focused on conveying his extreme proficiency in close-range combat as well as his agile mobility."

JAK AND DAXTER

"It was a blast to bring Jak's arsenal of guns into the fighting game landscape, while finding a different gameplay role for each rifle. As always, Daxter adds a little extra personality to every movement and attack animation that Jak performs."

SWEET TOOTH TWISTED METAL

Whoops! We forgot to ask Superbot about Sweet Tooth, the iconic face of the *Twisted Metal* series, but his fairly sinister appearance brings a horror-styled quality that the rest of the roster doesn't have – he also represents the first era of PS2 online multiplayer."

FAT PRINCESS

"As fans of the *Fat Princess* games know, the princess isn't actually a playable character in her own games. We thought it would be fun to turn the tables by making her into a fully controllable character, allowing her to summon soldiers, mages, and workers using the O button."

KRATOS GOD OF WAR

"The Ghost of Sparta is known for over-the-top action and visuals, and of course strong responsive combat. Fans will be pleasantly surprised at how closely he resembles his playstyle in the *God Of War* series, down to all the minor details including throws and brutal air combos."

PARAPPA THE RAPPER

"In many ways, PaRappa the rapper was years ahead of his time. His lyrics and gameplay adventures conveyed a great deal about his personality, and we've tried to represent as much of that as possible in his move set."

RATCHET & CLANK

"Another famous hero and sidekick pair from the PS2 era...The *R&C* series is home to some of the most interesting weapon designs in videogame history, so we were thrilled to transfer our favourites into *Battle Royale* while staying true to their roots."

WHO COULDN'T THEY GET?

WE GRILL SUPERBOT ON THE ELUSIVE MEMBERS OF THE ROSTER

SEPHIROTH? ALBERT WESKER? The barking dog from the *Silent Hill 2* secret ending? Superbot won't say who couldn't make the cut, but Edwards does admit that you can't have everyone when you're dealing with a game like *All-Stars*. "In a perfect world, we'd love to have infinite time and resources to include every memorable Sony character in the game, and a few off-the-wall guest stars that absolutely nobody would expect," he explains. "Obviously there are a few glaring omissions from our 20-character roster, but unfortunately the approval process for character selection is extremely strict and delicate, especially with regard to PSX-era properties that aren't currently owned by Sony." No need to be down about it, though – it's still a legacy-friendly list. "When all is said and done, we believe our roster consists of the best possible choices available to us, with a strong balance of fan-favourite franchises and diverse play styles."

> Check out our exclusive PlayStation All-Stars review on page 54!

THE TOP 15 TRUE PLAYSTATION ICONS

PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS HAS ITS OWN IDEAS ABOUT WHO THE ICONS OF THE BRAND ARE – BUT WHO ARE THE *REAL* HEROES THAT HAVE MADE PLAYSTATION A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH ACROSS 18 YEARS?



PARAPPA

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

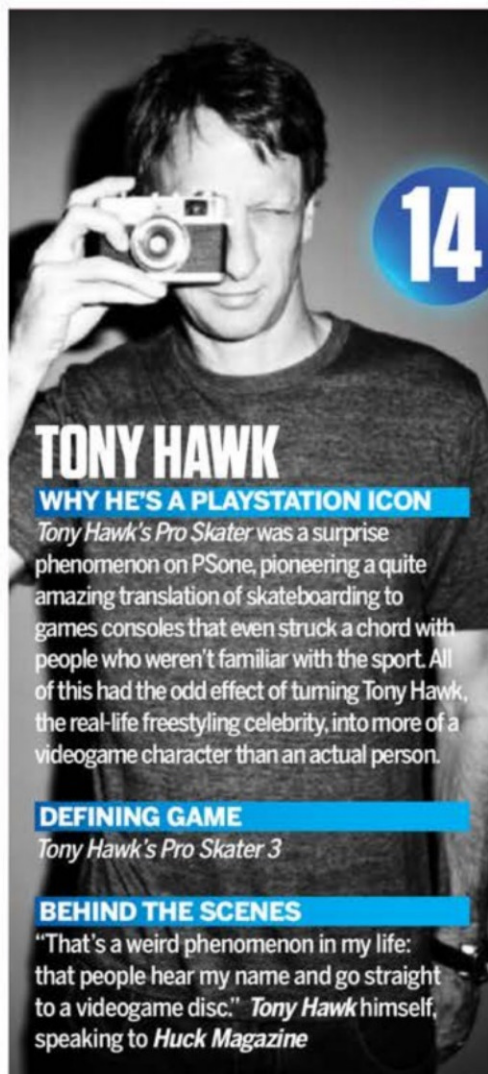
PaRappa is a symbol of the different sort of games that PlayStation offered people when it arrived on the market. It essentially burst the rhythm action genre wide open – and this rapping puppy, designed by artist Rodney Greenblatt, is a symbol of that quirkiness that the NanaOn-Sha studio brought to us back in its heyday.

DEFINING GAME

PaRappa The Rapper

BEHIND THE SCENES

"[Rodney Greenblatt's] designs have a unique quality wherein just by seeing them they turn your body's happy switch to 'ON.' Creator **Masaya Matsuura**, speaking to **NowGamer.com**



TONY HAWK

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater was a surprise phenomenon on PSone, pioneering a quite amazing translation of skateboarding to games consoles that even struck a chord with people who weren't familiar with the sport. All of this had the odd effect of turning Tony Hawk, the real-life freestyling celebrity, into more of a videogame character than an actual person.

DEFINING GAME

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

BEHIND THE SCENES

"That's a weird phenomenon in my life: that people hear my name and go straight to a videogame disc." **Tony Hawk** himself, speaking to **Huck Magazine**



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COLE MCGRATH

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

Good or bad – Cole is a character who changes according to your moral choices, not just in personality, but also in terms of his superpowers. In *inFamous 2*, he becomes either a fire-wielding badass or ice-lobbing hero, and arguably has the coolest range of abilities of any protagonist on PlayStation.

DEFINING GAME

inFamous 2

BEHIND THE SCENES

“If you think of extreme athletes, if they had superpowers what would they feel like in the world? That is exactly what Cole McGrath is meant to feel like”

Director **Nate Fox**, speaking to us

ICO

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

The horned lad from *Ico* represents the heights of Sony's creativity when it comes to crafting exclusive games for its platform – we couldn't see another publisher putting out such a distinctive project, where a horned boy tries to save a princess from a giant castle, but that image of Ico holding Yorda's hand has become a defining part of the PlayStation brand's iconography.

DEFINING GAME

Ico

BEHIND THE SCENES

“It is not about good vs. evil. ICO has his own reasoning and the Queen has her own belief. I wanted to leave the decision as to whether what ICO did was right or wrong to the player”

Creator **Fumito Ueda**, speaking to *Open Senses*

12



11 EZIO AUDITORE DA FIRENZE

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

The star of three *Assassin's Creed* games (the best ones – well, maybe not *Revelations*) and adorning the coolest outfit that the clean linens of the 15th and 16th centuries have to offer, Ezio is extremely well-realised, as we're shown every stage of his life from young, vengeful assassin to elderly champion.

DEFINING GAME

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

BEHIND THE SCENES

“Ezio's narrative structure is that of a trilogy which is one of the oldest... It's the whole thing where he becomes the hero, he becomes the leader and then he attains this sort of epiphany and begins to understand everything then completes the circle.” **Alex Amancio**, creative director of *Revelations*, speaking to us



9

DANTE

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

Dante will kill demons by firing snooker balls with his handguns, all while eating pizza. It's that cavalier dickishness that we love about the original Dante – he's an asshole, but one who you can't help but enjoy the company of, as he savages his way through demonic forces without losing his cool. Here's hoping classic Dante isn't gone for good.

DEFINING GAME

Devil May Cry 3: Special Edition

BEHIND THE SCENES

“The characters in my previous games such as Viewtiful Joe and Dante each have their own unique persona... and Dante has a tough guy, cool, image”

Hideki Kamiya, *Devil May Cry* director, speaking to *NowGamer.com*

JAK AND DAXTER

WHY THEY'RE PLAYSTATION ICONS

We had to bundle these two chaps together, since they're two sides of the same coin. *Jak And Daxter* are the perfect post-PSone platforming characters, who almost parody the concept in their daft exchanges. Typically great character work from Naughty Dog.

DEFINING GAME

Jak And Daxter: The Precursor Legacy

BEHIND THE SCENES

“For *Jak And Daxter* we set out to create a character and environment that merged elements from worldwide cultures. You can see the result in Jak, who is a hybrid of Western cartoons and Eastern manga.” **Andy Gavin**, co-founder of *Naughty Dog*, speaking to the *PlayStation Blog*

10



...AND FIVE WE COULD LIVE WITHOUT

NATHAN HALE

The problem with Hale is that his boring design made people think *Resistance* was just the run-of-the-mill shooter it always had the potential of being. No wonder he was left out of the third one.

VEXX/TAK/TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

Basically, any twee generic platformer characters, which the PS2 was inundated with. Vexx, Tak and Ty remain the most dishonourably dreadful examples of this Noughties cutesy backwash, though.

NAUGHTY BEAR

Seriously, a murderous bear? *Naughty Bear* sounds like a game that should've come out in 1988 on the Commodore 64, not the most powerful console on the planet.

BLOODRAYNE

With an idea that has a made-for-TV Syfy channel movie air about it, *BloodRayne* is a sexy vampire lady who fights Nazis – the sort of nonsense a 13 year-old history fan comes up with.

WAYNE ROONEY

We've seen his digital face so many times in *PES* and *FIFA* that we're blatantly done with him. Probably our least favourite PlayStation character ever by default.



8 CRASH BANDICOOT

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

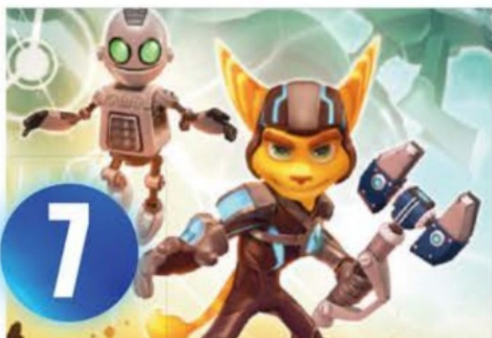
PlayStation needed a mascot – a Mario, a Sonic, or, erm, a Bubsy The Bobcat, and a tiny studio in California known as Naughty Dog gave us that icon, with the Taz-inspired Crash, who would go on to star in four of the console's finest titles (and *Crash Bash*). He'd be higher up this list, were it not for his poor recent form...

DEFINING GAME

Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped

BEHIND THE SCENES

"Sega had Sonic and Nintendo had Mario. But Sony's product slate was blank. So we set about creating a mascot on the theory that maybe, just maybe, we might be able to slide into that opening. I'm still surprised it worked" Co-creator **Andy Gavin**, speaking on his website all-things-andy-gavin.com



7 RATCHET & CLANK

WHY THEY'RE PLAYSTATION ICONS

As the longest-running PlayStation exclusive platform characters, Ratchet and Clank remain bastions of quality in a genre that barely exists anymore. Like Jak and Daxter, they're a mismatched comedy pairing that echo Pixar's methods of creating characters – no bad thing, and quite pleasingly, they're best associated with exotic intergalactic weaponry, like frogs that fire burps.

DEFINING GAME

Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time

BEHIND THE SCENES

"Ratchet and Clank have had their ups and downs over the course of the series, but their bond and friendship has only grown stronger." **Brian Allgeier**, Insomniac creative director, speaking to *PlayStation Blog*



6 LARA CROFT

WHY SHE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

Lara Croft is the original female PlayStation icon, and while she was initially known for her look, above her archaeological skills and ability to murder endangered species, *Tomb Raider* has evolved with times and kept Lara up there with the very best of contemporary gaming characters. Her influence proved to be strong on another character further up this list...

DEFINING GAME

Tomb Raider II

BEHIND THE SCENES

"I think that the days of us portraying a sexy, scantily-clad female as our character are gone, we needed to portray someone who is more human"

Karl Stewart, global brand manager at Crystal Dynamics, chatting to *NowGamer.com*



5 CLOUD STRIFE

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

The amnesiac, spiky-haired RPG antihero paved the way for a million rip-offs in the genre, such was the influence of the ten million-selling *FFVII*. With a pretty nasty past that is revealed over the course of the story, Cloud was the first hero that a lot of PlayStation gamers managed to get emotionally invested in. He also carries a massive sword, which is nice.

DEFINING GAME

Final Fantasy VII

BEHIND THE SCENES

"Sephiroth is always just out of reach... This story structure also overlaps with the reasons that Cloud has such a complex about his own past and I believe it is an effective tool for showing the relationship between the two characters." *FFVII* director **Yoshinori Kitase**, speaking to *Retro Gamer*



4 SACKBOY

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

Sackboy is whoever you want him (or her) to be, and he'll smile cheerfully (or cry adorably) depending on how you dress him. That's the beauty of Sackboy – he can be pretty much any other character on this list, with the right expertise, and by bringing such an amazing level of self-expression to PlayStation platforms, he's instigated a mini-revolution with the Play, Create, Share mantra.

DEFINING GAME

LittleBigPlanet 2

BEHIND THE SCENES

"He could be a boy or girl, a stuntman or an alien. The point was, people had to look at him, no matter what he was wearing and go 'That's Sackboy.'" **David Smith**, technical director of *Media Molecule*, speaking to us in 2008.



KRATOS 3

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

Kratos is just so ridiculously angry – he represents the extremes of everything besides that, though, including sex, violence and revenge. Betrayed by the gods and ruthlessly bloody, the star of *God Of War* is so well-regarded among the PlayStation collective that he'll have been the star of six games in under eight years when *Ascension* is released.

DEFINING GAME

God Of War II

BEHIND THE SCENES

"He is a lucrative character and Sony obviously has made an investment in him that's really worked out and the fans love him..." *God Of War III*'s director **Stig Asmussen**, talking to us in 2010



SOLID SNAKE 2

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

Metal Gear Solid was memorable for so many reasons, the by-product of its pop culture-obsessed genius creator Hideo Kojima, who crafted a refined, distinctive series that is rightfully regarded as a cornerstone of the PlayStation brand. Its gruff, Kurt Russell-esque hero, Solid Snake, is a fascinating force of nature, with the greatest voice in videogames – the ultimate stealth action hero. Fighting is all he was ever good at, and we can't imagine him doing anything else...

DEFINING GAME

Metal Gear Solid

BEHIND THE SCENES

"I like to stay up late in smoky bars, drinking shot glasses full of thumb-tacks. It's not an easy process, but it sure does give you that gravelly voice." Snake's voice actor **David Hayter**, speaking to the *unofficial MGS site* about how he prepares for the role



NATHAN DRAKE 1

WHY HE'S A PLAYSTATION ICON

We'd love to say choosing Drake was difficult, and that we agonised over the prospect of naming him PlayStation's biggest icon – but it really wasn't. Everyone loves Nathan Drake: the half-tuck, the quips, Nolan North, the fact that he mercilessly kills hundreds of people while seemingly being okay on the whole moral side of things. Drake is the perfect modern PlayStation hero, brilliantly well-rounded thanks to the excellent script work at Naughty Dog.

What Drake really symbolises is how far things like characterisation have come since the early days of the PSone, as well as the way advancing technology lets the heroes of our games be portrayed. Thanks to the wonders of

motion capture, Drake moves like a real person, while his expressions are hand-animated by Naughty Dog to give Nate and those around him that specific emotional touch necessary for the game. He's already inspired a number of knock-offs (some actually voiced by Nolan North...), but Nathan Drake should really inspire other developers to try harder when they try to build the next gaming hero – we're done with the idea of boring man with gun. Drake inspires us to dream bigger when it comes to what the PS4 might offer developers. Long live PlayStation!

FINEST GAME

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

BEHIND THE SCENES

“The idea is that [Nate] is a guy who rises to the occasion when put in circumstances that call on him to be a hero, but also that he's not very good at real life”

Amy Hennig, Naughty Dog creative director, speaking to us

DRAKE'S BEST MOMENTS



Crashing an airplane in a funny way (*Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*)

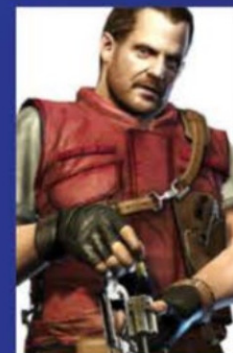


Surviving the world's most insane train convoy (*Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*)



Having a fight in an open, moving aircraft (*Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*)

HONOURABLE MENTIONS



BARRY BURTON

We toyed with the idea of including a *Resi* character, and it was between Wesker and Barry – Burton wins, of course, due to his comedy... everything (but mainly his moustache).



SPYRO THE DRAGON

He almost made it on to this list, but doesn't quite have the same hot streak as Crash Bandicoot, and riled us up a little by becoming a conduit to selling expensive toys in the kid-friendly *Skylanders*.



JOHN MARSTON

We debated over Marston, and we do absolutely love the growling veteran cowboy – but if we included him, we'd have to pack in every other Rockstar protagonist we like. Niko Bellic, Jimmy Hopkins, CJ Johnson, Max Payne...

Install

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth



Need To Know



GTA V in Spring

It's confirmed: *Grand Theft Auto V* will arrive in Spring on PS3. The giant-sized open world game doesn't have a specific month for release, but we'd guess May based on the fact that every Rockstar game has released in that month going back to *Red Dead Redemption* in 2010.



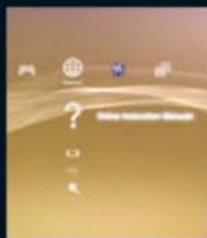
“ I don't think Sony wants to launch behind Microsoft again, so I'm confident that we'll see a PS4 in October or November 2013 **”**

Michael Pachter, Wedbush Securities

PLAYSTATION 4: THE ANALYSTS SPEAK

Though some might call it 'guessing'...

IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS



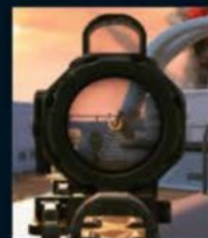
PS4 dev kits shipping?

On another PS4-related note, second generation development kits for the forthcoming console have reportedly been sent out to prospective developers. That means PS4 titles have been in the works for a while, then – fingers crossed on a massive announcement at E3 2013.



Rockstar wins lawsuit

Speaking of *GTA*, Rockstar recently won a lawsuit filed by Cypress Hill singer Michael 'Shaggy' Washington, who previously claimed *San Andreas* protagonist CJ Johnson was based on him. Washington filed the \$250 million suit in 2010, but the judge ruled he couldn't prove he was in the game.



£35 Call Of Duty Pass

Would you pay £35 now to get every piece of incoming *Black Ops II* DLC? That's what Activision is offering to players of the blockbuster shooter as a Season Pass. This is no doubt a great alternative for people who'd end up buying all the expensive downloadable content anyway.



“Rushing a new hardware launch has its dangers, as proper third-party support is critical for any platform's success”

Jesse Divnich, EEDAR



The past few months have given us some incredible games, with the likes of *Borderlands 2*, *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*, *Dishonored*, *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* and *Hitman: Absolution* giving us more hours of joy than there are hours to be had (and joy to enjoy). You'd think, then, that popular assertions it's 'about time' for the next generation of consoles to launch are off the mark.

Not so. At least not according to the professional guessers we spoke to. We had developers talk in detail back in issue 220 about what they wanted to see from PS4 and when they thought it would pop up, so it's only fair to let the ever-popular and sometimes right analysts say a few words.

Jesse Divnich, of EEDAR, told us outright: "I think it is vital that new hardware hit the market as soon as possible. It is clear that consumer's taste on HD consoles is waning as they are faced with a

plethora of other interactive entertainment options, which in most cases are much cheaper and easily accessible options. But rushing a new hardware launch has its dangers, as proper third-party support is critical for any platform's success."

True towards the latter end, but the millions of copies of super-popular titles (those mentioned earlier) shows interest in this gen isn't quite dead yet. Still, we didn't actually put that to Divnich and instead let him go on. "What this really comes down to is innovation," he continued. "The HD market is in much need of it and it is often the release of new hardware and peripherals that act as a catalyst for innovation."

Full to bursting with the lovely words of Jesse, we moved onto stalwart contact of most in this industry Michael Pachter, of Wedbush Securities. Initially telling us he would have to take his time to reply as he

had some major reports to see to, he was obviously convinced to send his answers within ten minutes after receiving the questions – probably because they were *that damn good* and the man has the utmost respect for **Play**. Maybe.

But the important bits: will Sony launch PS4 before Microsoft launches its next Xbox? Yes: "I don't think Sony wants to launch behind Microsoft again, so I'm confident that we'll see a PS4 in October or November 2013."

Could anything affect the launch date, bringing it forwards – or pushing it back? "It isn't likely that they will launch earlier, as it doesn't make sense to get out too far in front of software, and I'm pretty confident that few developers have been working on PS4 games for more than a year or so. Holiday 2013 will be a comfortable window for Sony, and will give them a chance to get a head start on

Microsoft. As for launching later, I think there are few limitations on components, as I understand that the PS4 is largely going to be built from commodity components, in contrast with the PS3's dependence on the cell processor and the Blu-ray drive. It's far more likely that PS4 will be built from off-the-shelf components, allowing Sony to commence and scale manufacturing rapidly once the console is announced."

But then, what does this all mean for the PS3 and its ongoing quest to have a ten-year life cycle? "The PS3 probably has a solid three years left for sales, so it should make it comfortably to a ten-year life span. There are a lot of people who are uncomfortable spending \$250 for a console, so I think price cuts to \$199, \$149 and \$99 will extend the life of the console."

And who are we to argue? Not an analyst, that's who.

INSTALL

“There is at least one area in *Inquisition* bigger than all areas combined from the second game”



NEXT-GEN RPG?

DRAGON AGE III: INQUISITION

Details and lovely art have us intrigued...

CASTLES (PROBABLY NOT IN THE SKY)

Have you ever wanted your own castle? If you have a soul then the answer is 'Yes, of course I have, you monumental fool.' And in *Dragon Age III* you may well be able to live out those dreams of all soul-holders. We imagine the castle will be a traditional RPG homestead in which to store your wares, house your characters and – hopefully – upgrade. We do love our home decoration, after all.

A MATTER OF SIZE

Some complained that *Dragon Age II* was too narrow; that focusing the action on one city was too slim an experience. So it helps, for those folks who didn't get along with *DAII*, that there is at least one area in *Inquisition* bigger than all areas combined from the second game. That's... quite big. Quite how this size will translate to how we play the game, we'll just have to see – there is such thing as *too big*...

RACIAL ISSUES

The first game might have allowed you to pick from a few different races for your main character, but the second one did away with that – *Dragon Age III* looks to be going down the same route. Though you can only be human, there will be more *Origins*-style customisation options and the ability to choose character backgrounds – a feature we still love from the first game.

UNDER THE HOOD

The engine powering all of *Dragon Age III* will be familiar to many of you: Frostbite 2. It's now clearly EA's go-to choice for running any and all of its games, and its inclusion in BioWare's RPG bodes well for the shinies we'll see on our screens. One thing though: does it mean we'll get destructible terrain and entire townships levelled by dragon attacks? Because that would be neat.





GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

DEAD SPACE FOR TWO

Turns out Dead Space was always planned to have co-op

There's been a school of thought popping up that *Dead Space 3* has had its co-operative mode thrown in as an extra purely to tick the boxes and keep the money men happy. While we can't say that isn't totally true, executive producer and ex-No Use For A Name bassist Steve Papoutsis pointed out something interesting to **Play** in a recent interview: co-op was planned, even implemented, in the first game.

"Co-op was something we actually talked about even on the original *Dead Space*," Papoutsis told us. "At one point late in development we had the engineering team set it up so we could play co-op – at that point it literally was a tacked-on Isaac – we ran around and said 'This could be kind of cool'.

But we weren't going to do that unless that character had a meaningful story and was integrated in the story – we couldn't do co-op on that game at the level that we wanted to, so we didn't do it."

The sequel, of course, included online play: "With *Dead Space 2* we took a stab at multiplayer – we're proud of what the team did there, it was fun, it was different, it was an inherently *Dead Space* take on multiplayer," but still no co-op. The third game? Yeah, why not: "But with *Dead Space 3* there are so many characters that are interesting in the *Dead Space* universe, and we wanted to bring another one into the story. So that's where we got the story linked in with co-op."

LIGHTING THE FUSE

Fuse doesn't look as much fun as *Overstrike*. EXPLAIN, INSOMNIAC

It's safe to say we have felt a little let down by the new look of *Fuse* – formerly *Overstrike*. It went from bright and colourful to dark and grey in the space of about a year. We couldn't just let it drop. No, we had to go and ask Brian Allgeier, creative director at Insomniac, just what was going on.

Changing the look of the game at this stage had to be risky, right? "I think we're pretty much terrified whenever we reveal a new game concept. Whether it be stylised and cartoony or more grounded and fantastic, it's happened with every game we've worked on. You never know how people are going to react."

But fear not, for Insomniac has a way of dealing with the issue of 'fan reactions,' as Allgeier pointed out:

"What's really cool is we recently flew a lot of Insomniac fans out to our headquarters in Burbank and we showed them the game. They had expressed concerns initially about the change in style and going less cartoony for something more grounded," he explained. "After they played it, they said 'This an Insomniac game. This is very unique.'"

But what about the 'serious' comment? Isn't that totally against what *Overstrike/Fuse* was going for? Not so: "There was a lot of reaction to that. And it's like, I want people to take the *Ratchet & Clank* universe seriously. I watched *Toy Story 3*, I took that universe seriously! So it's hard to find the right words to describe it. In the end, you have to play it."



ASSASSIN'S CREED: THE MOVIE

Fassbender's attached, but it'll still be terrible

Assassin's Creed has a film adaptation coming, according to reports, with Michael "The Only Good Thing About Prometheus" Fassbender attached to star. Ubisoft will be maintaining creative control over the project and... oh god, that's just terrible news, isn't it? Ubi will try and make the film too much like the convoluted mess that is the story to the games and... well, here's five other reasons an *Assassin's Creed* film is a bad idea.



FAR CRY

An abomination from Uwe Boll, as if there's anything else, and proof that Ubisoft doesn't always attach its games to positive outcomes.



RESIDENT EVIL

How this makes hundreds of millions of dollars each instalment we don't know, but we do know it's a terrible series.



HOUSE OF THE DEAD

Hahahahahaaaaaaah. Although since Boll is still making movies, who really loses? The answer is us, of course.



TEKKEN

Do you remember the Nineties, when we all thought a live action *Tekken* film would be brilliant because we were all obsessed with Jackie Chan at the time? This came out in 2009. It was ass.



HITMAN

More like Shi[Stop that – Ed]. In all fairness, though, this was nonsense of the highest order, but we do love star Timothy Olyphant in other stuff.

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Going to be EPIC... end of.
BRANDON HARLIM

It's going to be dead
awesome, it'll kill on
the charts.

CHARLIE DAVIS

I think it looks like a great
survival horror, but with 'the
end of the world' explained
to us. I honestly can't wait!

PHILIP TAKKEN

Not interested, don't think Xbox
fanboys will be jealous of it.

SEB AYCOCK

This might be the first
Naughty Dog game I'm all
that interested in. Oh, and
he looks like Max Payne
right before he shaved all his
hair and moved to Brazil, so
that's nice.

THOMAS DAVIS

If it lives up to the 'serious
and realistic gameplay'
they're pushing it as, it
will be awesome and a
good step to the next gen
of gaming. Us gamers are
getting older too you know!

TONY SKELTON

YouTube youtube.com/PlayMagUK

Anybody_ who thinks Xbox could run this game is insane, it
would probably instantly red ring.

GABOI234

When a game is created by Naughty Dog, *Crash Bandicoot* is
always on my mind.

JOHN RODRIGUEZ

Bioshock, *Dead Space*, *Splinter Cell*, both *GoW* (*God and
Gears*) all drop in 2013. Plus the new *Tomb Raider* revamp is
looking pretty darn good too. I think there's going to be a lot
of great games coming out in 2013 to give *Last Of Us* a run for
it's money for *GOTY*. Looks like the end of this generation of
consoles will be pretty sweet.

SHIBAKUN

twitter twitter.com/PlayMag_UK

@ANDYEASTON85
Apocalypse + Naughty Dog =
win. Can't fricking wait!!!

@NIRVANAFANWICKS
EKDJDDJSNSJSKDBJ
DJDJS DNDJDBJSSDNJHSJD
JS SNND JDKDKDSNDJD
JSJSJSN NKD KDND
JSKXNOS DHDJDNDKDJDK

@ALEXSTEEDEN
Looks great. And it gets bonus
points for being new IP as
well. Sony's early 2013 new
releases v strong in my book.

@CAMERONPARKIN
It looks really accomplished
and it will be interesting to see

how it compares with other
survival games.

@DSOINIX
Very excited about the last of
us every playthrough could
potentially be different from
what I've seen so far.

@ASTROMONKEY1980
I have a feeling it will be the
last big hurrah for the PS3.
The Cell Use the power of the
Cell.

@BIOMARVEL
If it's half of what the
Uncharted series was,
Naughty Dog will go down as
one of the greatest devs ever.

Play Online

Want to share your thoughts? Shout into our digital ears
at facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK, [youtube.com/
PlayMagUK](https://youtube.com/PlayMagUK) and [@PlayMag_UK](https://twitter.com/PlayMag_UK), where we hang out when
we're not doing work (i.e. all the ruddy time).

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“ I first dressed as Lara years ago, long before being hired by Crystal Dynamics, so I've had no particular advantage there **”**

We chat to Meagan Marie about her excellent Steampunk Lara Croft cosplay design – she's also community & communications manager at Crystal Dynamics, the custodians of the Tomb Raider franchise!

What is it about cosplay that you find so compelling as a hobby?

First and foremost, I adore cosplay because it's a visual manifestation of my fandom. I'm huge into games, comics, anime, and so on, and this is my way of paying tribute to the great creators and characters that resonate with me. The next facet that makes cosplay so compelling is the artistic angle. I went to school for Journalism/Mass Communications & Graphic Design. I find myself doing less and less of the latter these days, and cosplay allows me an artistic outlet. Through cosplay I've learned everything from armour fabrication to leatherworking techniques; wig styling to the basics of applying prosthetics. The journey is just as fun as the destination when it comes to making costumes.

How long have you been cosplaying?

I've been cosplaying five or six years now. That being said, I've done my best to wipe older cosplay photos from the Internet. They're a tad embarrassing, looking back. Everyone starts somewhere though!

Working at Crystal Dynamics, has that given you any advantage in terms of finding the right items for the Lara Croft costume?

I first dressed as Lara years ago, long before being hired by Crystal Dynamics, so I've had no particular advantage there. I've actually opted not to dress up as our new Lara, so to keep a clear line between work and play. I've still managed to get my fix of Lady Lara, though, as I recently collaborated with several artists on an original costume design – Steampunk Lara. It was my means of adding Croft couture to my wardrobe, but without blurring the lines of my job and hobby.

Of all the outfits you've created, which would you say has posed the greatest challenge to you?

Without a doubt, Anya Stroud from Gears of War 3 was the most challenging costume I've created. It took more than a year from early concept to execution. Not only did it require some advance sewing skills like corset making, but really pushed my ability to craft and age armour. The blood, sweat, and perhaps tear or two were totally worth it when I was invited to the Gears of War 3 launch in Paris by Microsoft. That may be the crown jewel on my cosplay career.

What's your criteria for choosing a great character to cosplay as?

Strength of character first, and then I look to design. If a character doesn't resonate with me – I can relate to them, or aspire to be like them – it wouldn't be worth the massive investment of time, money, and energy poured into the costume.

What is it about Lara Croft as an icon that you find enduring?

Lara's been my hero since I was 12. Her strength, intelligence, articulateness, wit, and beauty seemed to comprise the complete package. I think those traits have resonated with me throughout the entire history of the franchise.

Check out Meagan's website at www.meagan-marie.com

TOMB RAIDER'S LARA CROFT



“ I collaborated with several artists on an original costume design – Steampunk Lara. It was my means of adding Croft couture to my wardrobe, but without blurring the lines of my job and hobby **”**





“I get a buzz when I think about the potential scale and detail of Gotham City on PS4”



WHAT PS4 CAN DO FOR BIG SERIES

Which veteran franchises will gain the most from the next-generation?



REPLAYING BATMAN:

ARKHAM City recently and gliding across that immensely detailed, beautiful city, I still can't quite believe the leap Rocksteady made between *Arkham Asylum* and its successor. I mean, using the same hardware, just two years later, the London-based developer managed to draw out a much more full-featured *Dark Knight* experience. With new hardware on the horizon either this year or next, *Batman* is undoubtedly the series I'm most intrigued about in terms of creative possibilities – I get a buzz when I think about the potential scale and detail of *Gotham City* on an advanced platform.

I expect longer-running franchises will probably gain the most from the leap between generations. Proven successes will be bolstered by higher budgets, as well as a drive from

developers to find what the next stage of their established games will look like. Some series won't make the leap between generations – it'll be interesting to see which franchises are retired or rested when the PS4 finally drops in 2013 or 2014. Looking back at Naughty Dog's past projects, for example, it's never continued a series beyond the bounds of a single PlayStation platform; all of its *Crash* games were released on PSone, while the *Jak* titles began and ended on PS2. Could *Uncharted* do the same?

That wouldn't mean the end of the series, of course – it's Sony's biggest moneymaker and would live on even if Naughty Dog decided to try something new. Older series will have the hardest time making that leap, particularly the likes of *God Of War*, which arguably will need a rethink of its fundamentals in the

next generation if it's to stay fresh.

The real potential, for me, rests with open world games. If we look at what Rockstar achieved with *Red Dead Redemption* and *GTA IV*, Ubisoft with *Assassin's Creed III*, or even Avalanche with the expansive *Just Cause*, these games tease what could be achieved in sheer world-building in the next-generation. Just looking at how far that genre has come, even since the PS2, it stands to gain a lot with powerful tech. It's a newer genre, which helps.

But every series will be altered in some way by the PS4: sport sims can become more realistic, shooters can reach higher levels of brutality and survival horror titles (if they even exist by then) can find further rancid ways to scare the shit out of us. At this point, the PlayStation 4 is all potential – and you can't help but dream a little.



Assassin's Creed III pushes the technical limits on PS3.



GTA V is an indicator of what we might expect on PS4.

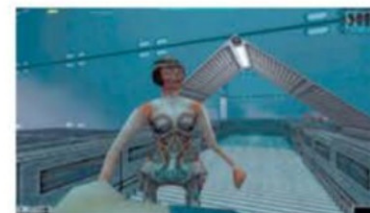
INSTANT EXPERT

BIOSHOCK INFINITE

All you need to know about Irrational's possible masterpiece

WHY DO WE CARE ABOUT IRRATIONAL GAMES?

There's a lot of hype surrounding *BioShock Infinite* and it's easy to get carried away in it all. Similarly it's easy to write it off as a bunch of nothing based on anything. So here, in four-game format, are the reasons why a new title from this studio matters:



SYSTEM SHOCK 2, 1999

Don't just take our word for it: find a way to get hold of this game and play it on your PC. It looks a bit primitive but it is, in our opinion, even better than the original *Deus Ex*. And it's still utterly, unquestionably terrifying. Damn those cyborg midwives.



FREEDOM FORCE, 2002

'Make a top-down, real-time tactical role-playing game starring a bunch of satirical superheroes', they said. So Irrational did. And this was in the time EA would publish games like this. *Freedom Force* is a lot of fun, incredibly well presented and – get this – actually funny. Bliss.



SWAT 4, 2005

One of the poster children of games that get the balance between simulation and videogame action absolutely spot on (it's not a catchy title), *SWAT 4* is still ridiculous fun to this day. The emergent elements will have you talking with friends about it for years to come.



BIOSHOCK, 2008

The point where Irrational made a splash on consoles, proving its recipe of thoughtfulness and fun game elements could work with this audience. A spiritual successor to *System Shock*, though it did admittedly lose a lot of the depth that made the previous release a true classic. Wait, what are we saying? *BioShock's* a true classic too.

ART SCHMART

February will see the release of the game (in the US) and a rather lovely looking art book, published by Dark Horse. If previous games are anything to go by, this will be a nice one to have on the coffee table. There's also a batch of action figures set for release in January.

THE INEVITABLE

The delay of *Infinite* didn't just have an effect on our will to live: it had a direct impact on the earnings, value and all that financial mumbo jumbo to do with 2K, its publisher. Though they were also negatively impacted by the fact a certain *GTA V* wasn't to come out in 2012. Oopsie.

HONORABLE RELEASE

The original *BioShock* showed the world has an appetite for more considered, dare we say intelligent gaming. We feared that attitude might have waned somewhat in the intervening years, but the hugely positive reaction to (the excellent) *Dishonored* shows: there is a strong audience for this sort of game. Good.

OUT WITH THE OLD...

There have been a fair few departures from Irrational that might have pumped us full of a bit of fear for the project. But the knowledge that former Epic bloke Rod Fergusson has joined the team and Jordan "I am a good designer" Thomas has been helping out for a while makes us confident again.

ALL STAR APPEARANCE

File this one under 'things we didn't expect', even with the Big Daddy appearing in *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale*: there's a level based on the floating city of Colombia. Will that mean *All-Stars* battling in *Infinite*? Probably not, no. Though it does show the grip Sony has over Ken Levine right now.

Developer: Irrational Games

Publisher: 2K Games

ETA: 1 March

Y U NO MP?

The much-rumoured (to the point it was pretty much confirmed) multiplayer segment of *Infinite* has, by all accounts, been cut. Seems it was prototyped in a number of ways, including a tower defence mode and something very similar to *COD's* spec ops, but it just didn't work. You have to be ruthless.

GETTING OUR HANDS DIRTY

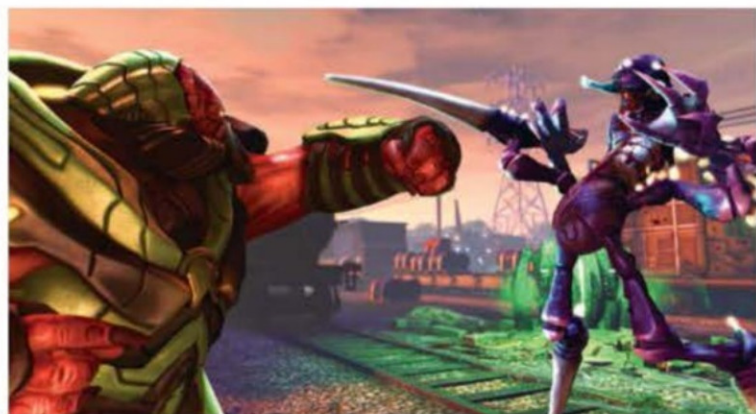
It's now been more than two years since *Infinite* was announced and in that time there's been a grand total of Hardly Any hands-on time with the game. In fact, we've not seen anything playable in well over a year. Should we be worried? We're not sure. But it is disconcerting.

TOP 5

GAMES THAT TREAT YOU LIKE AN ADULT



For an industry with so many games rated for 18-year-olds plus, there's very little out there that actually just treats you like an adult. We don't want to say 'mature', as that conjures up images of pointless violence and porn – no, we just mean games that don't simply rely on coddling and shock tactics



1 XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

You have to think, you have to plan, you have to be careful and clever with your moves – and you have to be lucky. If you're not all of those things, your people will die. And it's bloody refreshing to be treated like an adult for once in this miserable industry.



3 PORTAL 2

Portal 2 doesn't just treat you like an adult in the obvious way that it presents some brain-twisting puzzles to overcome. It also presents a game world that is genuinely family-friendly (it's an adult thing, trust us) and – best of all – it's funny like in the way proper adults write and perform comedy.

2 DISHONORED

Those blitzing through *Dishonored* in about four hours are, to echo a somewhat popular sentiment, playing it wrong. It's a game that demands patience to get the most out of it. Exploration to see a world that was crafted, not just 'made'. And rats. Mustn't forget about the rats.



4 SILENT HILL 2

Mental illness, rape, murder – all those things you see on the grown up news that the adults watch, all are represented in a fairly subtle fashion through *Silent Hill 2*. Actually, that's another thing: the fact it is relatively subtle in its portrayal of these elements, rather than just literally telling you about them (hello, *Dead Space 2*).



5 HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

You can probably say *Absolution* too, now that we've played finished code and rated it highly. But we'll stick with the known quantity. Just like *Dishonored*, it's a game in which you are rewarded for patience and planning as much as you are speed and execution (literally).

TEAM PICKS

Games That Treat You Like An Adult



SAMUEL

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

Call Of Duty talks to you like an adult – a stupid adult. "You like guns? KABOOM!" The sort of nonsense overgrown men barking at cinema screens cheer at.



REBECCA

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Like a lot of Rockstar's games, *Red Dead Redemption* doesn't dumb itself down. Yes, you can do murders with trains, but it's also got a, like, well serious classic revenge story.



IAN

CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

Actually I wanted to put *XCOM* here, but it's already in the main list. Sod *CivRev*, good as it is – it's all about *XCOM*. I love you, *XCOM*.



ANDY

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

Unlike *Fallout 3*, which no matter how much of an evil bastard you were, you were always forced into a 'good' ending, *FNV* gives you choices, and real consequences!

ANATOMY OF... ISAAC CLARKE

Dead Space 3's once-mute, now-gobby hero has been through a lot. Enough to send most people insane. Including him, actually. With the latest title in the series getting ever closer, we thought it rude not to give Clarke the once over

FACE TIME

When we first saw Isaac Clarke, all we were privy to was the back of his head and then, when he engaged the device, his shiny helmet. He was faceless and mute, simply a tool of death stomping around beautiful locales killing horrible alien things. Then they gave him a face and a voice for the second game, and we, as cynical Brits over the age of 14, sighed. It's not that he sounds annoying or is particularly badly written, it's just... well... we don't care what he has to say. "OH MY GOD THAT THING IS GOING TO EAT MY FACE!" Really? We hadn't realised, you massive dillweed.

ENGINEER (OF DEATH)

There's an element of the (very well educated and skilled) everyman with Clarke, as he is but a mere (very well educated and skilled) engineer. At least that's what we're told by the Man, because what we see is a highly-trained killing machine capable of wielding a host of weaponry and using it to incredible effect. Oh, and he has pretty much superhuman strength, too. Try stomping on someone's head. Go on. See? It's harder to burst it than you might think. As he's progressed, though, we've come to love Clarke for his Ripley-ness. A normal job, trained through experience, an expert on an alien menace. Yeah.

IN A NAME, WHAT'S?

We got to the point where we actually confused ourselves into "forgetting" what Clarke's full name was. As a result of this confusion, we searched for 'Isaac Clarke', expecting to be able to find his 'actual' name from the sci-fi author this search would lead us to. We're idiots, mainly. Anyway, he's named after Isaac Asimov, who wrote the *I, Robot* collection of stories (among many others) and Arthur C. Clarke, whose work was adapted into *2001: A Space Odyssey* (as well as a ton of other works). How many books has Isaac Clarke written? None we know of, the talentless hack.

ATHEISM, HO!

One of the defining aspects of the *Dead Space* world is Unitology – them there folks that worship the markers and see the effects it has on people as a gateway to immortality. Mad bastards, in other words. Clarke doesn't subscribe to this whole notion, thanks to the fact that his mum used what should have been his college fund to buy herself some nonsense Unitologist title instead. We're not making that up, by the way. Mama's selfishness gave young Isaac a huge distrust for Unitology and its followers, and this attitude has bled through into his dialogue a few times in the games.

SURVIVING THE GAME

THERE ARE ONLY THREE OTHERS TO HAVE SURVIVED NECROMORPH OUTBREAKS. HERE THEY BE



ELLIE LANGFORD

Initially reticent to accept his help, Langford teams up with Clarke in the second game. Then, as a direct result of teaming up with him, she loses an eye. Going by this logic, we wouldn't trust Isaac. Anyway, she's in the third game too, but has gone missing. Is she dead? Who knows.



LEXINE WELLER

Not only did she survive the events of *Dead Space Extraction* and what occurred on The Sprawl in DS2, Weller also seems to hold some kind of immunity to the insanity-inducing effects of the marker. Which has to be handy. She does get nosebleeds a lot though, which must be annoying for her and disgusting for others.



TYLER RADIKOV

You never see this bugger's face, but you feel his effects all over *Dead Space* mobile. Being a master of the old switcheroo, Radikov manages to make you think he's helping you out and stopping the spread of the necromorphs, when actually he's doing pretty much the exact opposite. And he gets away unscathed. Ridiculous.

Re:Play

You are the controller! But only on these pages

Someone draws an excellent picture of Ian, FIFA 13 upsets one of you and someone speaks in favour of Angry Birds – which is absolutely fine. Send us a letter and we'll file them below our office stress balls...

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ANGRY BIRDS ON PS3? YES!

As you may know *Angry Birds Trilogy* was released for PS3 on the 28th September to what I felt was much annoyance from gamers. Maybe it was the £27-£30 price tag that came with a game you can get on a tablet/smartphone for £1-odd. Or maybe it was the fact people didn't want to see a trend where popular app games start making their way to PS3. Possibly it was something else that I don't know. But I for one was welcoming to this as I have a five-year-old son and he loves playing *Angry Birds* on my phone so when I saw *Angry Birds* for PS3 I picked it up straight away. Why? Because here was a game that I could play with my son on my PS3 that was simple enough for him to play and something that I actually liked playing. Which leads me to say that there aren't enough games on PS3 for adults and children to play together. I did purchase *EyePet* for him once (I swear it was for him) but he just didn't like it and I haven't been able to find anything else that he would enjoy playing and can actually play. I would like

to see more easy to play games for children on the PS3 that adults can have fun with as well. As I feel at the moment that it's either one or the other being catered for.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Heather

We didn't review *Angry Birds Trilogy* – mainly because we weren't sent review code by Activision, and the release came in the hideous gap between our deadlines, but the release is fairly self-explanatory. It might look nice, but it's a frivolous idea to package such cheap games so expensively. We're glad you've found some worth in it, though.



A DRAWING OF DRANSFIELD

Hey guys!

In almost every issue of **Play** you're asking for drawings of Ian. I don't know why, but I came up with this.

Don't ask me what happened to his TV, because I honestly don't know. Maybe he was playing *PaRappa The Rapper* for 12 hours straight or something...?

I do feel sorry for Ian, because he now has to buy a new telly and they don't make them crafted out of wood anymore.

Regards,

Alko Groen, The Netherlands

Well, you've captured the attitude of the man perfectly, Alko – he is often a combination of very angry, shrieking in frustration, and in front of televisions. The look is almost there, too – but Ian Dransfield isn't quite as Woody Allen via Neil Buchanan (Google this) as you've depicted him.



STAR LETTER

WE NEED SHORTER GAMES

I love PS3 Games!

I have amassed a great collection, based on the reviews and scores in **Play**. However, circumstances have meant that I have become increasingly 'time poor', so much so that approximately 60-70% of my games remain either unplayed or unfinished.

That's where I was hoping you guys at **Play** could help. I need to know what are the shortest and longest games on PS3, so that I can actually finish the short ones and avoid the long ones until time allows.

I wouldn't even contemplate starting *Fallout 3* or *Skyrim* at the moment, but managed to complete *Lollipop Chainsaw* and *Heavenly Sword* in about five hours each.

I know players complete games at their own pace and every player is different, but I was hoping that you could

print some kind of approximate game length guide/list. Maybe a ten shortest and a ten longest, or perhaps even include a rough game length guide in your superb directory, or in your future review verdict section.

David Naisbett

Fair enough, David – we might do something on the best value games out there in the future, but in the meantime, here are ten short games for you to blast through on PS3 (all of varying quality): 1. *Homefront* 2. *Dishonored* 3. *The Walking Dead* 4. *Ratchet and Clank: Quest 4 Booty* 5. *Modern Warfare 2* 6. *No More Heroes: Heroes Paradise* 7. *Portal 2* 8. *Heavy Rain* 9. *Civilization Revolution*, and 10. That breezy little walk in the park *Dark Souls*. We might've been joking about the last one.



YouTube
www.youtube.com/
NowGamerTube

Things you may have missed on NowGamer.com's YouTube page



DISHONORED
YOUR FIRST KILL



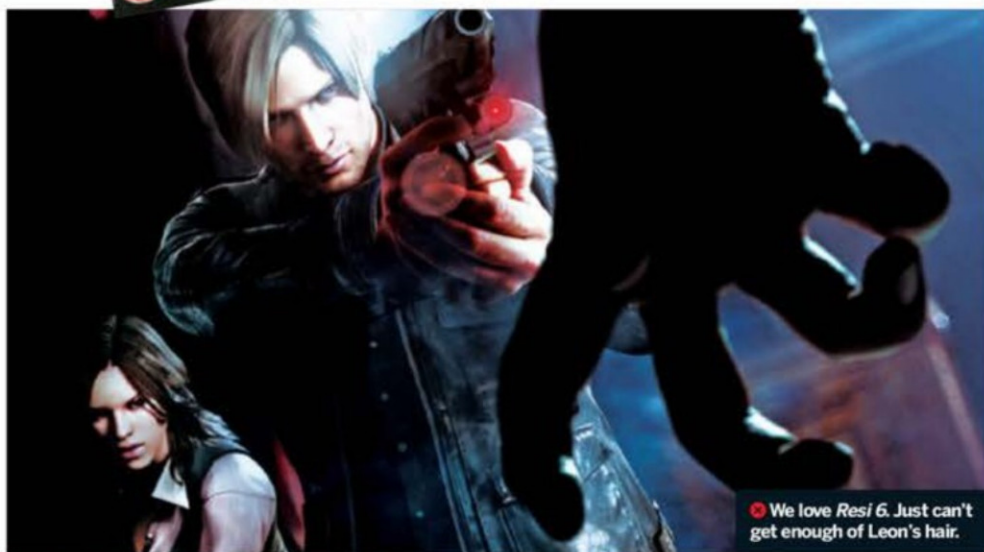
NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED
MASSIVE VIDEO REVIEW



ASSASSIN'S CREED III
PLATFORM COMPARISON



Write in, and win! If you're chosen as Star Letter, you win a game. This month, the prize is Bethesda's brilliant FPS/RPG hybrid Dishonored. Put it this way: it's the idea antidote to all those identical sequels that come out every year



We love Resi 6. Just can't get enough of Leon's hair.

THE BIG ISSUE

Resident Evil 6: NOT SH*T

First I just wanted to congratulate you on your professional review of *Resident Evil 6*, which unlike some lesser publications provided a balanced opinion to this divisive game. Being a fan of the series since 1996 and disappointed by the recent PSN demo I was beginning to question purchasing the new game. However coupled with your early review I'm glad I did as it's a fantastic game, which leads me to the future of *Resident Evil*. With such mixed reviews how can the series adapt to meet more successful trends? Open world. It's not a change I encourage, more a logical advancement for an ever changing series and gamer base. (Spoiler ahead) There are already hints of open world exploration in Jake's second chapter – searching for the memory chips.

I would love the series to return to its roots as with the Leon campaign but unfortunately *Resi* has had to adjust to a more commercially justifiable experience, resulting in the most successful *Resident Evil* to date. It's clear

Resident Evil has set up home in the co-op genre, but with the four player sections is Capcom just testing the waters for a far larger co-op experience? Multiple players in a large zombie/BOW infected city – *Resident Evil* outbreak without the technical limitations of the PS2?

I don't know the future for *Resident Evil* but I do know that both Barry Burton and the Nemesis are long, long overdue for a return!

The debate begins here...

Jamie Ambrose

We loved *Resident Evil 6*, and would heartily recommend it to anyone – particularly those of you who just have the money for one game this year. The future is unclear for the series, especially after the baffling critical response it got from some outlets (anyone who thinks it's worse than *Operation Raccoon City* needs a beating from Chris Redfield), but we'd be happy to see it continue in the multiple campaign direction.

facebook

www.facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK

We take to our Facebook army made up of our nearest and dearest to ask...



Play

When do you want the PS4 to get here?

Like • Comment • Share • about an hour ago •

Bayley Martin i f**king hope you can import your trophies and data from ps3 to ps4 cause if you cant im gonna have to get 900 trophies again

Ahmad El Saegh It can take as much time as its possible so my console wouldnt be outdated

Teri Otis Redding 2014 is when the PS4 and 720 will come out...Period

Lewis Lichtenberg Still luvin my PS3 for now

Charlie Davis Now please

Adam Thompson I'm ready for PS4 right now to be honest lol

John Fitsimons there will be deffently one of the next gen consoles realeased end of 2013, look at all the big developers for both microsoft and sony and nothing has been announced in development for late next yr, its gonna be a boring xmas 2013 if next gen is not out by then

Kelly Brady At least not for another 3/4 years...theres still so much more the ps3 can do

Katie Galister Not for another few years - ps4 just isn't needed yet

Wayno Bazinga Man Russell I'm more than happy with my ps3 and agree its not at its peak yet, let's work on that first sony hmm?

Rowan du Toit Not in a hurry, especially if its not backwards compatible (And I haven't won Lotto yet!)

YouTube

YouTube

Peep the latest trailers and hottest gaming clips at youtube.com/NowGamerTube



MEDAL OF HONOR: WARFIGHTER
REVIEW AND COMPARISON



NAUGHTY BEAR: PANIC IN PARADISE
GAMEPLAY STUFF



RESIDENT EVIL 6
SERPENT EMBLEM GUIDES

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Podcast

The **Play** team talks games every month
nowgamer.com/podcasts/nowgamer-podcasts/



FIFA 13's glitches still won't put people off the series.

FIFA 13 LETDOWN

I wonder if you can give us some advice in regards to us as consumers and the world of gaming. For my sins I am big *FIFA* fan and have been excited in the run up to it being released. It does play very well and in my humble opinion is the best version yet. However, it doesn't always work. One third of the time in career mode the ball is completely invisible in matches which is essentially a game breaker.

The games industry seems to be the only industry where the consumer just accepts it as normal. I know they will put a patch in to fix the problem but it's not really acceptable, it should be rigorously tested before it's released so you are given the product the seller should be proud of. The music industry also has tight deadlines but wouldn't dream of releasing an album before some of the drums were put in some tracks, or you wouldn't buy a new car without any wheels for example, because the consumers and media

would slaughter them for it. I paid £49.99 essentially for something that wasn't a completed product, and it is no little figure of a price.

So how can we as consumers fight against this trend? The obvious answer is voting with our feet but I want *FIFA*, I just want it to be ready when I buy it.

Thanks for listening and I look forward to your advice.

James Koppert

Games can technically be exchanged with retailers if they're proven faulty, but we're not sure if they'd categorise bugs as faulty – so the blame should lie with the publishers. At the moment, though, this doesn't seem to be a clear-cut ruling on all this, and the culture of online means that publishers are more and more cavalier about getting away with it. It's wrong, of course – at the time of writing, EA is looking to release a patch that sorts all this out. But not everyone has online. The only way to really stand up to this nonsense is by voting with your wallets.



WHY WE LOVE PLAYSTATION PLUS

Dearest **Play**,

I feel a bit sorry for PlayStation Plus at the moment. When it was originally released we all brushed it aside as a cash-grabbing concept on behalf of Sony, which to be honest, was slightly true. In its first few months it barely lived up to its subscription price. However, after E3, Sony have really started pushing PS Plus and I can see why! When you have a look at the games that are given away each month, it's ridiculous! In the first month games such as *inFamous* and *LittleBigPlanet 2* were all offered... for free. And since then we've had games such as *Red Dead Redemption*, *Bulletstorm* and *Motorstorm Apocalypse*, all great games. For the price of £40 a year, the same as one single game, you can get over 12 or so awesome games all on PS Plus. Yet, it's still not very popular. It's a shame really because it's a great deal, Sony just need to push it a bit more.

Thanks guys,

James Ward

PlayStation Plus is getting there, and it will surely gradually become a more popular service as people tune into the benefits of the service. It's much better value than the comparative Xbox Live Gold Membership...

WIN SAINTS ROW THE THIRD

Thanks to our good friends at THQ (well, professional partners), we've got two copies of the brilliant *Saints Row The Third* to give away! Just answer this simple question to be in with a chance of winning a copy:

WHICH PORN STAR MAKES AN APPEARANCE IN SAINTS ROW THE THIRD?

- A) Sasha Grey
- B) Winifred McBoob
- C) Alfred C McNob

Pop your answer and address in an email to play@imgamepublishing.co.uk with the subject header 'What am Play and what is I doing here'.





We ask you to ask us questions on Twitter, and then you do, and then we ignore you on Twitter and answer them here. It's the perfect system!

@DARTHKEBAB when am I winning stuff from you?
#istillloveyou

We tend to give stuff away every week @PlayMag_UK – keep an eye on our feed for some exciting giveaways we have planned.

@PAYNEY992 Is the vita likely to go down in price any time soon?

Early next year, we reckon.

@UGAMERZ what is the most popular psn title among your staff?

Well, since Ian is leaving this month, that means it's down to Samuel – and he says *Flower*, with a slight leaning towards *The Walking Dead*.

@BEATRIZSHARICEP Do you want more Followers?

Ok! Follow @BobTRY and RT this phrase and I will follow you and your friends

Nah, we're not doing that, we're tired. You can, though.

@DSOTAM Why doesn't SONY put out a keyboard and mouse peripherals? :P

There are plenty of USB options out there, mouse and keyboard-wise – might be handy when *Final Fantasy XIV* turns up next year.

@PS3_PLAYA Whats the strangest titles you guys have played this Gen? Mines would be *.Detuned* and *Linger In Shadows*.

We definitely concur with *Linger In Shadows*, and we'd maybe extend that to *Shadows Of The Damned*, *Bayonetta* and PSN oddity *The Last Guy*.

@PETERGOTHARD What do you think Sony will learn from its market performance this generation when planning a "PlayStation 4"?

Not let Ken Kutaragi announce it.

@SQUIZZZ7 With the possibility of *Uncharted 4* in the future. What location or setting would you want to see?

Check out our feature on page six for Drake stuff.

@PETEBELLAS when will the PlayStation double up as a time machine?

Let's strap one to a DeLorean and find out.

@PJMARTIN If you could only have one ps3 exclusive, which would it be?

Well, probably *LittleBigPlanet 2*, since we could just spend a long time making every other game if we got bored of Sackboy. Either that or *Lair*.

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15,693
Jan-Dec 2011

Starhawk is still available
for a very reasonable price.



PLAY-MAG.CO.UK

STARHAWK DESERVED BETTER

In what has to go down as a huge case of 'That's a shame', *Starhawk* developer Lightbox Interactive has announced redundancies, downsizing and a refocusing on iOS development. The move comes after *Starhawk* failed to set the charts alight, or even kick up a few sparks in the first place. It might not be a related issue, but it would be a fair assumption to make. This, despite the fact that *Starhawk* was actually really quite good. Sure, it had ignorable single-player that acted as little more than a training mode – yet was pushed as a fully-fledged thing. And yes, it was marketed so little that more people know of the existence of this little blue toy figure thing I have under my work computer than they do the game. But it was a damn fine online title and it did some genuinely interesting things with the third-person shooter/vehicle-'em-up genre (that we just made up). Not least of which was the RTS element, which was frankly the closest we're going to get to *Starhawk 2* on PS3. Then there's how our very own Samuel refers to it as 'the spiritual successor to *Star Wars Battlefront*', which is as glowing an endorsement as you could get. It had everything stacked in its favour, yet it just went out and died. And that's a big, fat shame. *Starhawk* was a genuine alternative – an interesting title in a morass of me-too, identikit blah.



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Looking back at Sony's library of first-party games, there's a clear emphasis on creativity, innovation, and quality

TORO INOUE

SONY MASCOT

"When choosing characters, we made it a priority to add as many unique layers of combat as we could possibly fit in - from the straightforward brawler style of Sweet Tooth, to Ratchet's long-range dominance, to all of Spike's oddball gadgets, to Toro's stance-change craziness!"

SPIKE

APE ESCAPE

"Some [fans] may not realize that the series continued developing on the PlayStation 2. Battle Royale's version of Spike is based on his most recent incarnation, in Ape Escape: Million Monkeys."

SACKBOY

LITTLEBIGPLANET

"LittleBigPlanet is all about giving players the opportunity to create their own playgrounds and share them with friends. With Sackboy, we wanted to capture that feeling of interacting with levels, creating custom obstacles, and combining moves in unique ways."

KRATOS

GOD OF WAR

"The Ghost of Sparta is known for over the top action and visuals, and of course strong responsive combat. Fans will be pleasantly surprised at how closely he resembles his playstyle in the God of War series, down to all the minor details including throws and brutal air combos."

PARAPPA THE RAPPER

RATCHET & CLANK

"In many ways, Parappa The Rapper was years ahead of his time. His lyrics and gameplay adventures conveyed a great deal about his personality, and we've tried to represent as much of that as possible in his move set."

RATCHET & CLANK

RATCHET & CLANK

"Another famous hero/sidekick pair from the PS2 era... The R&C series is home to some of the most interesting weapon designs in videogame history, so we were thrilled to transfer our favorites into Battle Royale while staying true to their roots."

WE COULD THEY G

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PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2013

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Hands-on with Raiden lopping hands off



The entire room is laughing at *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, and for once it's not at the name. We're chopping up a giant bipedal tank that moos and we've managed to cut it into approximately 300 pieces (there's an on-screen counter) with judicious hammering of the square button. It's silly, it's over-the-top, it's damn satisfying, but it's not really *Metal Gear*.

Revengeance is absolutely *Metal Gear*, though. Don't be fooled by the fact it's also resolutely a Platinum Games title, running at a smooth 60fps and bearing quite a resemblance to both *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish*. From the cut-scenes that last far longer than they should and include ridiculous acronyms and cod philosophy to the way you're interrupted not two steps inside the target building with a codec call to ask "How's it going?" This has the stamp of Hideo Kojima's series all over it. And we love it for that very reason.

The thing is, we love it for being a Platinum game too. We're not sure what we love it for more, right now. Safe to say, our time with *Revengeance* – limited as it has been – is time we have savoured. Yes, there's the obligatory, sensible disclaimer that it might all bugger up come final release. But if the final game is what we've played repeated for six to eight hours, it's going to find itself accepted into the fold as 'a game **Play** likes lots.'

Revengeance is set some four years after *Guns Of The Patriots* and follows the one we all used to hate, Raiden, as he settles down in his family life with wife and child. Well, we would were it not for the fact he's forced back into action with a private military company (*Metal Gear* loves its PMCs) and basically has half his face chopped off by a naughty blighter. Maybe the guy played *MGS2*. This explains why Raiden looks like he does – more robotic than ever and a bit more pissed off than he's ever been. It's

also where we're going to stop talking about the story because dear lord this is a Platinum game and why aren't we talking about the game yet?

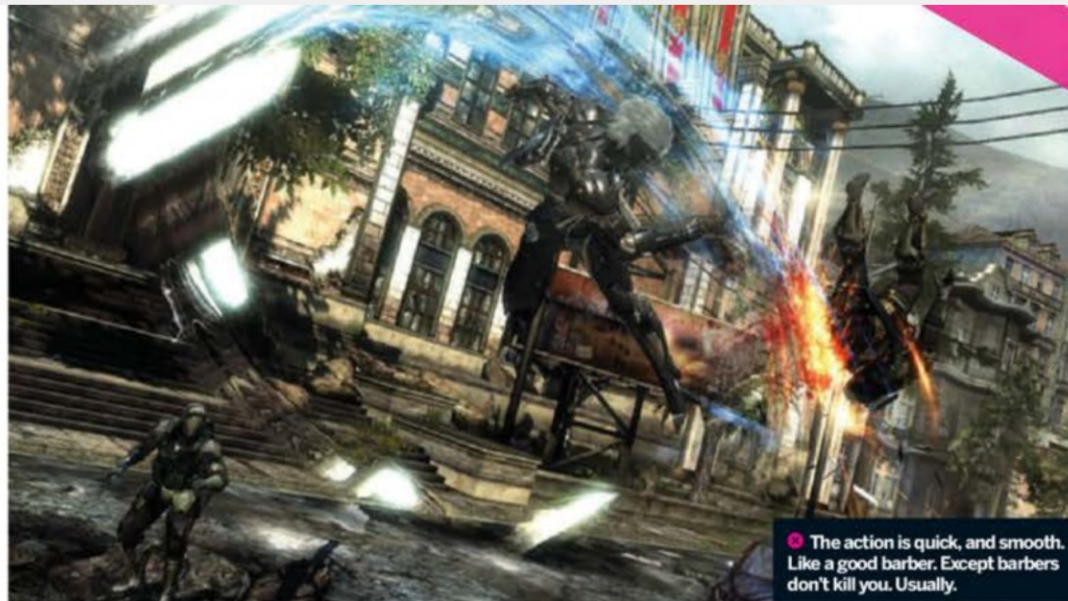
Ah! The game. *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* is pretty much exactly what we hoped for, taking hints of the series it's based on and combining them with Platinum's expertise in all-out, frantic action. Standard combat, which sees Raiden comboing his way through faceless minions (who chop up nice and easily), flows well and appears to have scope to mix it up nicely. We don't know if the player can unlock new moves and suchlike as the game progresses, such is the limitation of playing a preview build, but it would seem a logical assumption. Without it, the combat would definitely suffer: it would become stale as you progressed.

Leaping, stabbing, slicing, grenading and rocket launching your way through the standard enemies is all well and good (very good, actually), but it's >

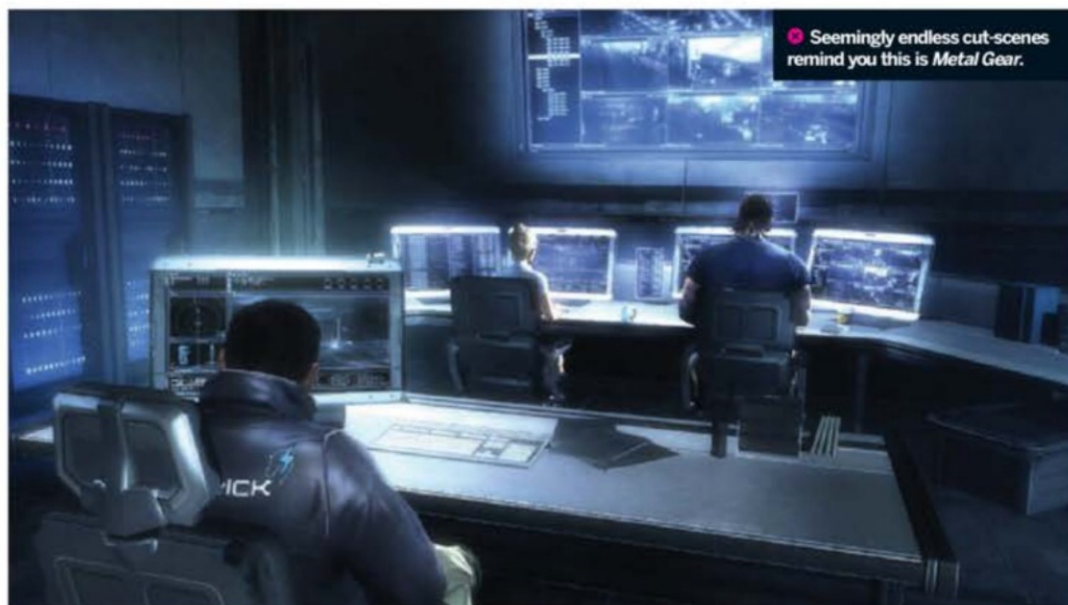




Safe to say, Revengeance looks the part.



The action is quick, and smooth. Like a good barber. Except barbers don't kill you. Usually.



Seemingly endless cut-scenes remind you this is Metal Gear.



ZANDATSU!

Gesundheit

BLADE MODE ISN'T just for show, allowing you to aim your blade swipes more carefully and slice enemies (and trees) into hundreds of pieces. It serves a purpose with regards to the zandatsu ("cut and take") element. In basic terms, it means you use your slow-mo kills and a timely press of the circle button to get health and energy from your opponents. In more complex terms it means: you chop them up and get bits from them. Wait, that's more basic. The two elements – blade mode and zandatsu – are intrinsically linked and, as a total non-surprise, work very well together.

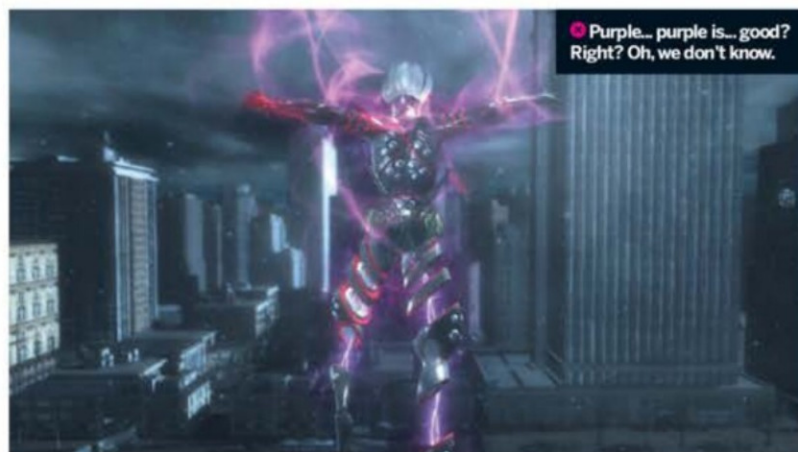


It's fun how the only way to make Raiden more likeable is to make him less human.

PREVIEW



That's just not a very fetching swimming costume.



Purple... purple is... good? Right? Oh, we don't know.



Super-secret PMC with branded leather jackets? Check.



Obligatory over-the-top method of approaching a battlefield IS GO.



ZERO(ES) LINKS?

Will it tie together? Probably not **REVENGEANCE COMES FROM** a time before *Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes*, but it's fair to mention Kojima's other foray into the series he promised to step back from about ten years ago or something. They're basically at the other end from each other when it comes to the chronology of the series, Platinum's game coming after *MGS4* and Kojipro's coming just after *Peace Walker*, but there's still scope for link up. Though admittedly it's likely to be something fairly inconsequential and more a nod from one to the other than a massive, overarching tie-in. Probably.



There's a delightful amount of stupid, excessive gore. Huzzah!



> in the big encounters that Platinum's titles live or die. Our encounter with a chainsaw-tail-toting robotic dog-wolf with a proclivity for stating "combination complete" after battering you into a half-robo, half-human pulp would say *Revengeance* is set to live. Because it's great – a classic boss encounter with attack patterns to learn, reinforcements to lose embarrassingly to when you're not paying attention and annoyingly overpowered special attacks to learn the timing on how to counter.

This seems to be a key element from what we played: the ability to time your parries and counter accordingly. Rather than relying on a straightforward dodge and/or block system, *Revengeance* opts for the more aggressive, more difficult to time parrying system. You'll see an on-screen prompt when an enemy is about to attack – different for each type of foe – and have a brief time in which you can input a direction and square to parry. Do so successfully and it opens up the bad guy/robot/mooing thing to a beatdown. Do it unsuccessfully and, well – you end up like our compatriots on

gamesTM magazine: dead in a corner, being laughed at by everyone present.

From just a short amount of time with *Revengeance* – and after wrapping our heads around the ins and outs of the control scheme – it soon became a furious, fast-paced ballet of super-violent action, verging on a smidge too much. But all the time, every step of the way – every swing of the sword, every limp lopped off, every robotic chainsaw-wielding wolfdog we managed to (eventually) batter – there was nothing but total control. It's the Platinum Games way, after all.

There is a stealth factor to the game though, regardless of how you're forced into some battles and how it really isn't a stealth game like previous *Metal Gears* would have you believe. It's not a major element, but it can provide some tactical advantage and blessed relief from the unrelenting enemy onslaught should you so want it.

So you activate your now-obligatory HUD super-vision majiggy (not its official name) and enemies are highlighted. You see where they are,

where they're facing, where they're going. And it allows you to sneak up on them and ram Raiden's sword through their back in all its gory glory. We do hope there isn't much in the way of forced stealth, mind you, as it didn't feel like an especially strong part of what we played, fun as it was. Of course, if you are spotted then a familiar exclamation mark appears along with the traditional *Metal Gear Solid* you've-been-spotted-idiot sound (we reckon that's what the wav file is called on Kojima's computer). For the game: does little. To make us smile: does lots.

A bumpy start put some off, being picked up by Platinum Games confused even more, and the melons have become a bit of a joke in the tutorial: a lot has changed since *Rising* was first announced. But somehow it seems that it might all land on its feet, smelling of roses, being a turn up for the books and getting that revengeance it wants so very much. Even if it is still *not a word*.

MGR: *Revengeance* is being developed by Platinum Games. Check out metalgearsolid.com/rising for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

It's like *Bayonetta*.

Crossed with *Vanquish*.

You can laugh aloud at it, then genuinely enjoy what you play.

It's quite hard.

READ ME

Revengeance is one of our most-complained-about games to feature on our DVD, as our DVD guy doesn't like having to edit out all the blood. There's a lot of blood.

PREVIEW



It's extremely satisfying pumping rounds into Aliens, and gleefully shooting off their individual limbs.



Pyromaniacs, the final game promises to include a flame-thrower so you can roast Xenomorph to your heart's delight.

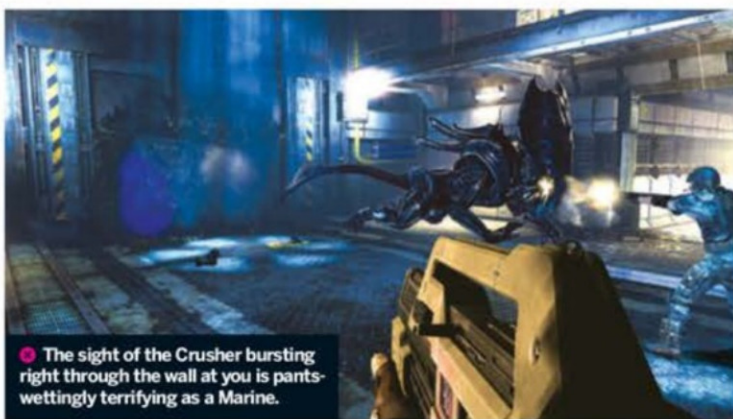


They're coming out of the walls! At its most frantic *Colonial Marines'* multiplayer actually makes you feel like you're in Cameron's classic movie.

NO ESCAPE!

Battling for survival on an Alien world

COMPETITIVE TEAM DEATHMATCH isn't the only multiplayer mode Sega revealed to us during our time with *Aliens: Colonial Marines*. It'll also come with a four Vs four Escape Mode that'll have Marines moving from point to point on multiplayer maps as they attempt to escape the marauding Alien horde. It's a perfect match for this particular fictional universe.



The sight of the Crusher bursting right through the wall at you is pants-wettingly terrifying as a Marine.



The Smartgun is an awesome equalizer for the Marines, but using it makes you a slow and plodding target.



RELEASE DATE: 12 FEBRUARY 2013

Aliens: Colonial Marines

Another glorious day in the Corps

PS3

We're actually frightened. It's hard to believe, given our real-life surroundings in a brightly lit, crowded room with a teammate within elbowing distance, but when we play *Aliens: Colonial Marines* we're mentally in a more cinematic place. For a few crucial seconds, we're actually on LV246 and separated from our squad mates, being stalked by a hulking Xenomorph Soldier. That's bad enough, but this isn't just any Alien. Oh no, this is an Alien being controlled by another player, and they just happen to be a cunning git. We catch it scuttling on the shadowed ceiling in our peripheral vision and spin, pouring echoing Pulse rifle fire into the lithe extraterrestrial beast. It doesn't finish it, and it lunges. We lash out with our melee attack, gaining just enough space to draw our Itchaca M37 12-gauge shotgun and splatter him against the wall.

We chuckle with relief, but it's short-lived as with a piercing screech, we suddenly find ourselves pinned to the deck by another more gangly-looking Alien. We have just enough time to quietly say, 'Oh bugger!' before it messily eviscerates us in gruesome third-person and scrambles off in search of another victim. Aliens: 1, Colonial Marines: 0.

It's a quintessentially 'Aliens' moment, and just one of many while playing *Aliens: Colonial Marines*

multiplayer. We'll admit it; the game's constant delays means we had mixed expectations, but the human half of *Aliens: Colonial Marines* asynchronous 6 Vs 6 multiplayer is looking seriously gripping. Gearbox Studio has crafted a formula combining periods of heart-stopping fear with bursts of nail biting adrenaline – and from what we've played, it's working.

Playing as a Marine squad against a team of developer-controlled Aliens on two multiplayer maps, Lost Hope and Origins, it's quickly clear how elaborate an homage to *Aliens* this is. Our armored Marines look spot on, and their customisable set of weapons, the M41A Pulse Rifle, two types of shotgun, the long range burst fire Assault Rifle and trusty pistol all look, sound and more importantly feel as they should. Naturally, you're equipped with the iconic Motion Sensor, but using it causes you to lower your weapon, leaving you momentarily defenceless and terrified as you hear the beeps of stalking Aliens. Early in the game we learn the spawn point for the SMART Gun, a powerful hip-mounted machine gun with sensors that track Aliens, and can rip them to glistening shreds. We briefly feel invincible until our plodding pace, and slower turning speed, see us bloodily killed by flanking attackers.

There just so many ways for Marines to die and despite fan fears over the game's different Aliens types, they work, cleverly forming an engaging enemy eco-system reminiscent *Left 4 Dead's* with its special zombies. Those revealed so far include the classic, terrifying Soldier Alien, the Lurker, a spindly killing machine that pounces upon Marines from incredible distances and the Spitter, an acid-spewing nightmare that sprays you with flesh-melting mucus from the shadows. The most terrifying new addition however is the massive, armoured Crusher Alien, which like the Smart Gun is a spawn pick for the Alien team. It charges you, scattering clustered groups of Marines while its fellow nasties rip confused survivors apart. If an Alien leaps upon you, you're pinned and toast unless a teammate shoots it off you.

All the Aliens, bar the Crusher, can crawl across walls and ceilings as easily as the ground, to take advantage of the environment. Lost Hope is a ruined colony habitat and a deadly rats warren of shadow-filled corridors. Origins, in contrast, is a vast outside loading bay filled with huge shipping crates and a mixture of big open spaces and tight narrow areas that make for much more open, 'Last Stand' type battles, and both totally support *Colonial Marines'*

engaging terror/adrenaline-based gameplay. The Aliens feel horrifically powerful but playing as the Marines doesn't feel totally unfair. If you work as a team – players will need to verbally communicate over PSN or die – lay down fields of fire and watch each other's backs you've a chance of holding the Xenos at bay and racking up the kills. We quickly find ourselves slipping into military jargon, ordering each other to 'Watch our sixes' and screaming things like 'They're coming out of the walls!' without a hint of irony as we battle to survive. Yes, we're knobs.

With our matches played to a time limit, the Aliens would often throw caution to the wind as the clock ran down, just throwing themselves at us, giving matches a great sense of pacing and making them feel very much like one of the climactic scenes in *Aliens* itself. It's hard not to be drawn in, especially if you're a fan. While *Aliens: Colonial Marines'* asynchronous play occasionally feels a little clunky, we don't know how playing Aliens will be yet. While we do worry that the edge of fear might eventually be blunted by the fact that no matter how gruesome your last death because you'll really just respawn in a second, what we've seen so far is impressive.

We're ready to hope this could be the *Aliens* game that we've hankered for ever since we first watched Cameron's classic, and that's as exciting as it is scary.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It feels just like being dropped into the 1986 movie *Aliens* – honestly.
- The various types of Aliens work almost *L4D* style.
- Human Vs Aliens feels realistically balanced and fair.
- The Marine weapons set is satisfying and varied.

READ ME

Gearbox Studios finally promises to deliver a modern *Aliens* game that gets across the spirit of the classic 1986 movie with what feels like just the right balance in its exciting multiplayer.

Aliens Colonial Marines is being developed by Gearbox Studios. Check the web site for more details: www.sega.co.uk/aliencolonialmarines

PREVIEW



● Bit of a Lucha Libre vibe going on here. Protection is important.

● We know: doesn't look like a lot of originality is going on here.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel

Two too many?

PS3

Just imagine the person out there who didn't bother buying *Dishonored*, *XCOM* or *Hitman* this year because their favourite franchise is MIA. "Where's *Army Of Two*?" they'll say, cursing the absence of their beloved 65% franchise.

Okay, the joke here is that we don't believe anyone like this actually exists – *Army Of Two*, with its generic characters, roughshod level design and dudebro-centric storyline is a hard franchise to love, and we wouldn't exactly be upset if *The Devil's Cartel* proved to be its final outing, especially when better EA series lay dormant (hello, *Mirror's Edge*). Still, not deterred by our pessimism, the new one has the hallmarks of Visceral Games, the *Dead Space* developers – and what that entails is scrapping some of the elements we might not have liked on any level from the previous two games.

"First it was like going back to things like the fratboy moves like fistbumping, air guitar, talking about having sex..." lead designer Julien Lamoureux tells us. "These clearly are crossing the line in acting and voiceover. These are the things we decided to move, opting for

things more sophisticated, giving a bit more depth to the character, more sarcasm versus first-degree jokes."

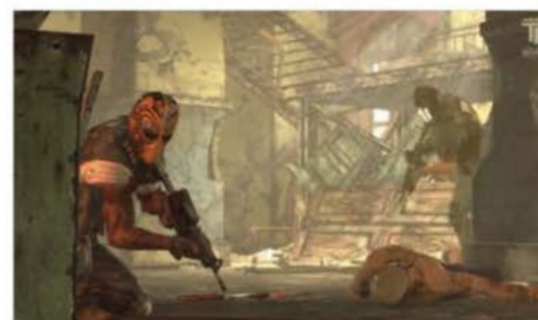
This new instalment will supposedly be elevated by an 'Overkill' mechanic, a sort of in-action rewards system that encourages co-op play. "The entire idea behind it is that the more you cooperate – the flank, tag-team – you can also have co-op combos so if you do action in fast succession, you'll get Overkill faster. If you want to be a lone wolf then you can do that and get Overkill but it'll take more time. Also one important thing about that is the more you play co-op the more you get Overkill, but you also get money the more you work together and the longer you're in Overkill, which helps you rank up quicker. So you will want to cooperate with your friend."

We ask if Lamoureux is worried about the idea of it coming across as a bit dudebro still, in the vein of *Call Of Duty*. "Some of the military shooters are probably more serious than us," he says. "But it's just really the tone and setting it right. Instead of having the fistbump...we're having more sophisticated humour. If people want to

compare on this and that then good for them, but I think the entire package is different enough, also the cover system as well, the interactive elements, the storytelling. This time around we made sure that the story was really well implemented with the design, getting good actors, good cinematics, we're really taking our time. We didn't want cinematics of just two people talking, we want to be that action blockbuster game where as other games for that more realistic approach."

It's at least vaguely ambitious, then, and with the inclusion of the Frostbite 2 engine, *The Devil's Cartel* looks a little better than its predecessors, too. Still, we can't help feeling *Army Of Two* is the epitome of a military shooter too far – a symbol that videogames are exactly what people outside the medium assume them to be. Still, Visceral's overhaul of the series promises something a little richer in terms of mechanics and presentation, so let's wait and see if *Army Of Two* has the ability to evolve beyond mediocrity.

Check out *Army Of Two's* official website at www.armyoftwo.com if you just need to know more about the second sequel

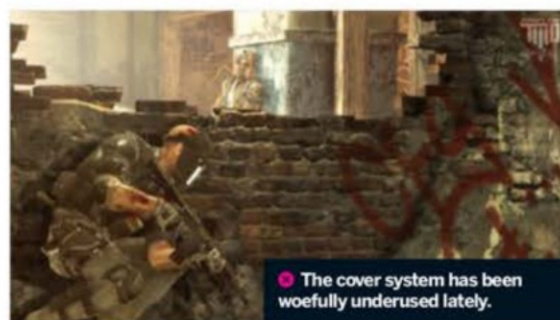
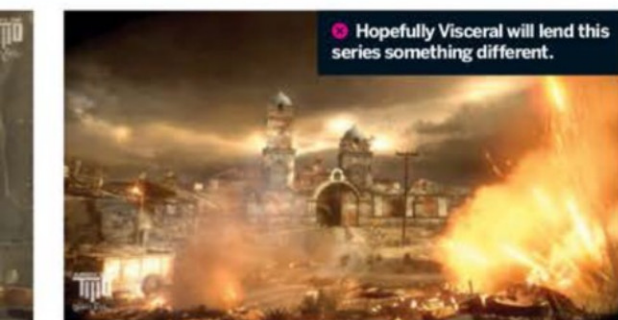


WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The much-loved series is finally back!
- Visceral is bringing a bit of *Dead Space* pedigree to the game.
- Alright, bit of sarcasm there, but it doesn't look too bad.
- In-depth customisation options, which is ruddy lovely.

READ ME

Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel is the third in the series. Expect to be sitting in cover a lot.

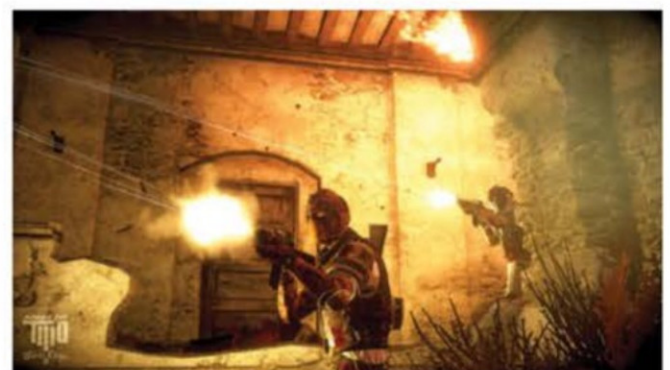


ALL NEW VISCERAL

What the Dead Space developer's name means for The Devil's Cartel...

"MOST OF THE team is a new team," confirms Lamoureux. "It's a new studio [of] Visceral Games, but there are a couple of people who worked on the other one. I can't really give numbers on the amount of people but just know that the vast majority of people didn't work on the last two ones but we have some people in various roles who worked on the last one."

● This is one bit in the demo we felt we'd seen in other games.



PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2013

Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch

PS3 We got our hands-on, we didn't want to take them off

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Level-5 usually makes great JRPGs (ignore *White Knight Chronicles*)
- The voice acting is surprisingly genuinely superb
- And the music is just as superb, if not more
- We may have mentioned before: LOOK AT IT

Ni No Kuni is being developed by Level-5 and Studio Ghibli. Check out www.ninokunigame.com for more details.



READ ME

Level-5 created one of the great overlooked gems on the PS2: *Rogue Galaxy*. Released when the PS3 was out, it sadly faded into obscurity in Europe.



Wandering wonder

It takes about an hour for things to really get going in *Ni No Kuni* – if you have a problem with that, just be quiet and go elsewhere – but once it gets going it doesn't exactly hold back. You are dropped, near-literally, into another world and, once a bit more exposition is out of the way, are left to wander. It's not open-world nor is it a sandbox experience, but the sense of freedom and *wonder* is tangible. It's hard to put across without experiencing it, but it works fantastically well.



Big money, big prizes

It seems like such a crass thing to be impressed by, but after years of sitting through pointless, sub-par JRPGs with a budget of £23 thrown at them, we're allowed to be somewhat awed. *Ni No Kuni* is a game with *budget* behind it, and it shows. Not just in the look, the sound, the translation and so on, but down to elements like simple animations: Oliver changes how he runs down stairs rather than adopting the seemingly traditional 'float on the spot with your legs waggling except down a slope' approach favoured by other, less-money-heavy games.





✓ Seriously, LOOK AT IT

There's a point where something stops just being 'nice looking' and starts being 'phenomenally nice looking' and then we start salivating heavily and pass out from dehydration. That's what *Ni No Kuni* has done to us. We're having to sue Level-5 for loss of earnings thanks to all the work we've missed because of our numerous hospital stays as a direct result of staring lovingly at *Ni No Kuni*. That is literally what has happened. (NOTE: That is not literally what has happened, but it does look nice. So look at it.)

✗ Neesh

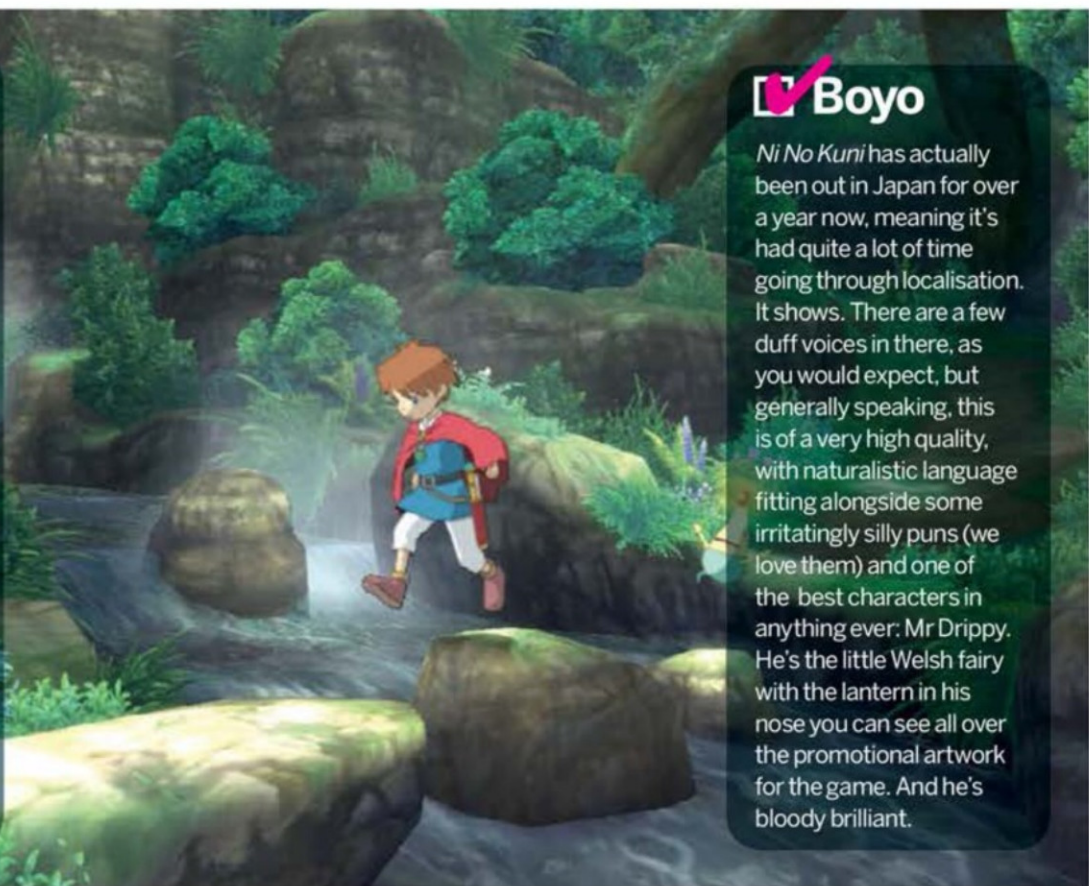
It will only ever be niche, though. For all its popularity, Studio Ghibli's movies are niche, not mainstream, and with a smaller potential audience to draw from than with movies, *Ni No Kuni* is even more niche. So will it appeal to gamers? Will many be drawn into its cutesy style and traditional (if refined) JRPG mechanics? In the most part we'd say no. But it will still have an audience and we genuinely hope it does well – sure, it's not an underfunded indie struggler coming out fighting, but we deserve nice big-budget games too, don't we?

✓ Scoring points

There has been a big thing of how *Ni No Kuni*'s music has all been recorded by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. 'Woop de do, big wow' we may have thought, with our cynicism-addled brains struggling to get up the enthusiasm we were expected to have from such an announcement. Then you hear it. Soaring, catchy, hummable, surprisingly non-annoying tracks cleverly back up all elements of play to the point that anywhere you're *not* hearing music, you notice. Anyway, we're off to buy the soundtrack now, because we are wonderful nerds.

✓ Over familiar

Combat keeps itself pretty much unknown until you've been playing for a while, and even when it is introduced it is done so in a rather staggered fashion. Initially it's just Oliver thwacking enemies with his wand and casting a few spells, but soon enough you gain access to a Familiar – a creature created from within Ollie. He has other powers and skills to master. Then you're given another familiar later on, and when other characters arrive they have talents to incorporate into your battle plan too. Layers on layers on layers...



✓ Boyo

Ni No Kuni has actually been out in Japan for over a year now, meaning it's had quite a lot of time going through localisation. It shows. There are a few duff voices in there, as you would expect, but generally speaking, this is of a very high quality, with naturalistic language fitting alongside some irritatingly silly puns (we love them) and one of the best characters in anything ever: Mr Drippy. He's the little Welsh fairy with the lantern in his nose you can see all over the promotional artwork for the game. And he's bloody brilliant.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: TBA 2013

Leaving Capcom, this is evidently the game Inafune has always wanted to make.

Soul Sacrifice

Former Capcom legend Keiji Inafune talks to us about his triple-A Vita RPG and comparisons with Monster Hunter



Can you discuss the origins of *Soul Sacrifice*, and how your past experiences in development helped you decide to make a game like this?

Soul Sacrifice was the first game concept I came up with after I became independent. Originally I wanted to make a fantasy piece starring a wizard, but not a fantasy in the conventional sense; I wanted to create an 'Inafune's interpretation' of a fantasy. Of course, from my previous experiences, I intended to create a game that would surprise everyone and make them want to play it.

What is it about the creation of *Soul Sacrifice* that energised you as a game designer?

In the 25 years of gaming history that I have witnessed, there have been many technological revolutions and evolutions in the creation of games. However, recently the specs and technology have become too advanced, and I feel that the element of surprise is lost.

When thinking about the next level of creativity, I thought that I could implement emotion in to the game system, such as 'emotional conflict', 'doubts' and 'the suffering of having to make the ultimate decision' therefore taking a challenge with *Soul Sacrifice* that no-one has taken before.

What do you feel makes *Soul Sacrifice* a perfect fit for the PS Vita, as opposed to other formats?

I really wanted *Soul Sacrifice* to be enjoyed as a multiplayer 'cooperative battle' game, so considering the ease of gameplay, I chose the Vita. I believe *Soul Sacrifice* does not waste any of the Vita's features, specs or abilities.

Until now I have continuously challenged myself with new, original titles for new platforms. This time also, I want to create a new way of playing with a new hardware. I hope that people around the world will enjoy playing *Soul Sacrifice* on the Vita, and that *Soul Sacrifice* will become a killer title capable of pushing sales of the Vita.

Do you think the Vita is lacking a multiplayer culture, right now?

Yes, I want a new way of playing to begin with *Soul Sacrifice*, and a new multiplayer culture take root with the Vita. But first I want players around the world to try it.

When you left Capcom, it seemed you had a number of creative goals that you could only achieve elsewhere – do you feel you're achieving them through this title?

Of course as a game creator I had the confidence that I would be able to create something new, and creating *Soul Sacrifice* together with SCE was

something that I could only have done independently, which therefore gives it a lot of meaning. I would like to continue to create games that are very Inafune; that only Inafune can create.

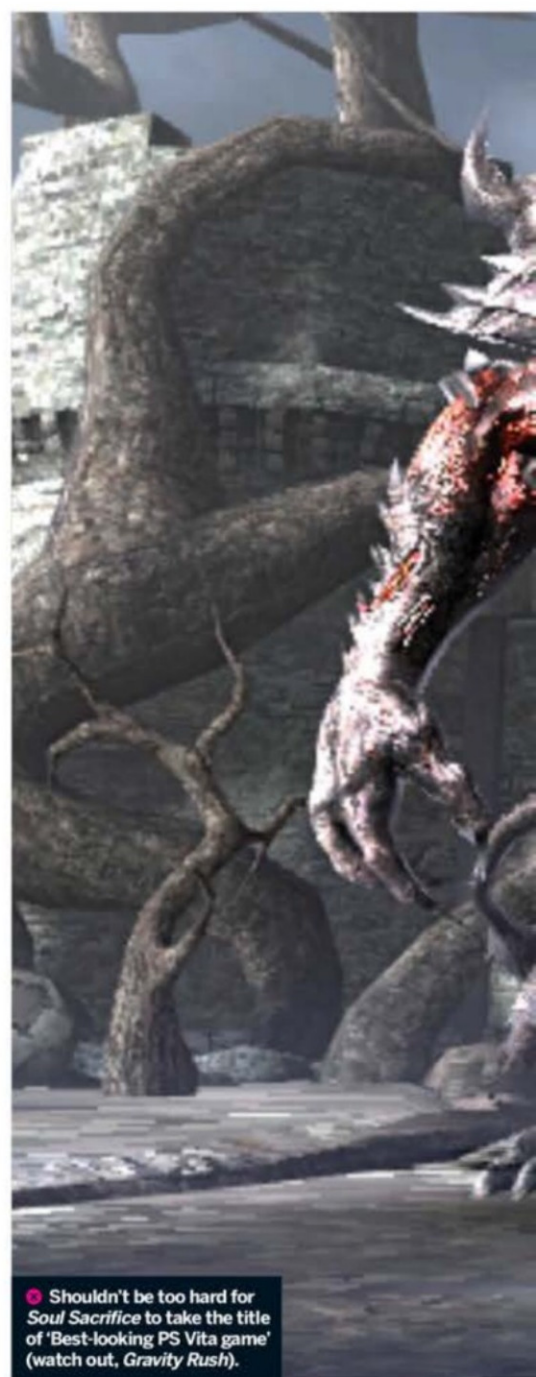
How do you feel about the comparisons made to *Monster Hunter*?

At this year's TGS2012, we were able to show a playable version of *Soul Sacrifice* for the first time. I think many comparisons will be made, but I think that the people who actually played it understood that it is a completely different game. I myself know that it is a completely new creation, and I hope that it surpasses *Monster Hunter*.

Are you conscious of Western gaming trends when making *Soul Sacrifice*?

How does the game reflect that?
Of course. I am always conscious of Western gaming trends, and of course *Soul Sacrifice* was created with Western tastes in mind. As I said before, I think that what users seek now is something that goes beyond graphics. It's the heart. What's most realistic is the emotion that a person feels, and I think a heart-wrenching gaming experience is what will trend as realism amongst the new generation.

Soul Sacrifice is being co-developed by Sony Computer Entertainment and Marvelous AQL. Learn more here: www.jp.playstation.com/scej/title/soulsacrifice/ja



Shouldn't be too hard for *Soul Sacrifice* to take the title of 'Best-looking PS Vita game' (watch out, *Gravity Rush*).



Since *Monster Hunter* defected to Nintendo hardware, *Soul Sacrifice* should fill the co-op void.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A sexy alternative to *Monster Hunter* on PS Vita
- An original PS Vita title! That should stop people moaning about their handhelds
- Keiji Inafune is responsible for many of Capcom's defining games
- There's a choice aspect surrounding the monsters, which should make a nice touch

READ ME

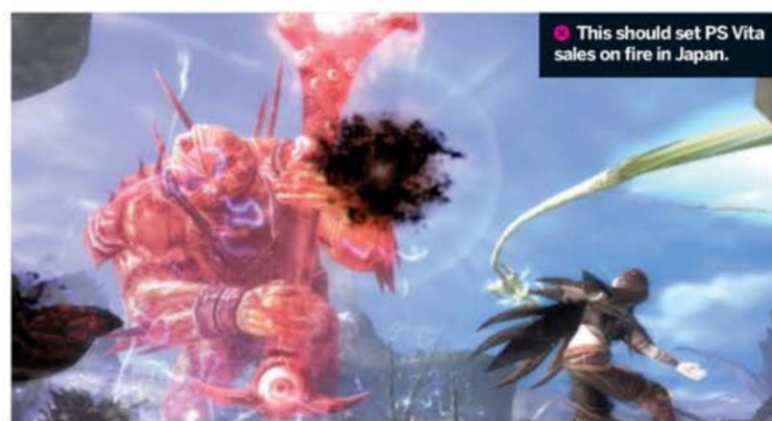
Inafune played a key role in the creation of *Mega Man*, *Onimusha* and *Dead Rising* for Capcom.



CHOOSING FATE

How *Soul Sacrifice* provides players with choice

THERE'S A DOUBLE MEANING to the game's name, it turns out, as players are forced to make difficult choices to progress in "To gain immense power it is necessary that one sacrifices," Inafune explains. "To kill a formidable enemy, a body part, a comrade's life, or even your own life may be sacrificed. These choices we make daily between 'sacrifice' and 'salvation' are not often seen in the world of games."



🔥 This should set PS Vita sales on fire in Japan.







KILLING CALL OF DUTY

HOW DO YOU MAKE A GAME THAT CAN KNOCK ACTIVISION'S FPS OFF ITS PERCH? YOU WORK WITH A WORLD-CLASS FILMMAKER AND TRY TO OFFER GAMERS A DIFFERENT KIND OF STORYLINE AND SETTING – BUT DESPITE HIGH SALES AND SOME ACCLAIM, **HOMEFRONT** LED TO THE DEMISE OF ITS DEVELOPER, KAOS STUDIOS. WE TRACKED DOWN KEY MEMBERS OF THE TEAM TO GET THE INSIDE STORY ON HOW IT TRIED TO MAKE A COD KILLER, AND THE EVENTUAL HEARTBREAK OF THE STUDIO'S CLOSURE...

Imagine how hard it must be to make a successful console FPS in the wake of *Call Of Duty*. Armed with a colossal budget, relentless marketing power and a more or less dedicated yearly audience, the Activision series has pretty much reduced the military shooter sub-genre to a two-horse race, between itself and the emerging *Battlefield* franchise. But this generation has seen numerous attempts to stand up to that series, or even just echo its monumental success – and few have a more interesting making of story than *Homefront*, a conceptually distinctive yet flawed FPS, the development of which ended with the shuttering of Manhattan-based developer Kaos Studios. For the people involved, both from those we've spoken to and the staff testifying to other outlets, it's clear that the furious working environment of the studio affected people in a lot of ways, with an equal measure of pride in the project, honesty about the pressure of trying to rival a behemoth like *Call Of Duty* and contemplative grief at Kaos's demise.

Prior to beginning work on *Homefront*, the studio was figuring out a sequel to its debut project, *Frontlines: Fuel Of War* (the PS3 port of which was killed late in development). The narrative of that game shared certain similarities with what would become *Homefront* – an America ravaged by shrinking oil supplies, for example. But *Modern Warfare*'s overwhelming success made the team rethink certain aspects of the world they created for *Frontlines*, including fictional weaponry. "I think that, in evaluating how that title did, we realised that games like *Call Of Duty* were getting more traction because all the equipment in there was more or less real world," says Luis Cataldi, art director on the project until 2010. "You were firing an M4, you were fighting with an Abrams tank, you were flying a real helicopter and doing combat with real weapons and vehicles that people were familiar with. So when we were considering the possibility of doing *Frontlines 2*, we were like, 'We can't really go back and add those weapons into the fiction we created for *Frontlines*.'"

The high-level design team at Kaos eventually decided that there were too many different ideas to adapt to a *Frontlines* sequel – and *Homefront* was born out of that. "A lot of our creative goals in the early stages of *Homefront* were to bring the war home and create that sort of modern

combat experience here in the United States, but bring a lot of the weapons porn that was exciting about first person shooters that *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield* had made popular with real-world weapons," says Cataldi. But there was a weightier pop culture influence, which became the primary point of comparison with *Homefront* for many. "One of our favourite movies was *Red Dawn*, so how do we recreate that *Red Dawn* experience but projected into the future? And what enemies can we use?"

THE TEAM WENT about creating a single-player prototype to get the greenlight from THQ's upper management, what's described as a five-minute 'vertical slice' demo. This took the team between four to eight months to create, and outlined the world of *Homefront*, an America ravaged by oil shortage and occupied by a foreign military force; set entirely in a cul-de-sac, it encapsulated the

game's suburb-centric American setting, and how a large-scale invasion would affect normal people. THQ responded to the single-player prototype in an extremely positive way, and an advanced version of it was to be

We learned, probably in the first couple of months of development and pre-production, from some of THQ's Chinese offices, that if we villainised the Chinese in any way it would be very, very bad for sales of the game in China

presented with the game's announcement at E3 2009.

Next came a difficult period in *Homefront*'s birth – initially, the primary antagonists who put America in this oil stranglehold were the Chinese, but this changed due to several factors, both logical and commercial. "I think it was about two weeks before E3 2009," recalls writer CJ Kershner, who initially worked at Kaos as a contract tester before becoming intrinsically involved in the writing. "This late stage change from the main antagonist being the Chinese People's Army to North Korea, which required a lot of last-minute changes and dialogue recording."

"We learned, probably in the first couple of months of development and pre-production, from some of THQ's Chinese offices, that if we villainised the Chinese in any way it would be very, very bad for sales of the game in China," says Cataldi. "After doing a lot of early development from an art/design perspective, word came down that China was no longer going to be the enemy and then, trying to figure out a viable reality – that the North Koreans would be interested in coming with an invading army to the United States – was a design challenge." >

HOMEFRONT

Very early on, Danny Bilson and some of the design leadership at Kaos really started talking about Red Dawn and the Red Dawn experience

> Yet the background of the story's development would become another interesting chapter in *Homefront*'s creation. A USP of the eventual product was the involvement of *Apocalypse Now* and, of course, *Red Dawn* screenwriter John Milius, a collaboration that apparently came about because of a connection through Danny Bilson, THQ's former VP of Core Games and sometime screenwriter (he co-wrote cult classic *The Rocketeer*).

"Very early on, Danny Bilson and some of the design leadership at Kaos really started talking about *Red Dawn* and the *Red Dawn* experience," reveals Cataldi. "Bilson and Milius had worked together in the past and they were still friendly, and started batting round the idea of involving Milius. Milius is a film writer and a television writer, and I'm not sure what conversations they had at an upper level, but he had started getting involved with how the fiction played out. And Milius's style is pretty raw. He goes for the jugular very quickly, and really wanted to bring into the story the brutality of an invasion and an invading army."

Some of the more contentious aspects of *Homefront* apparently came from Milius himself. "Every time we tried to be safe and calm and mild, he always dialled it up to 12, saying 'no, you have to bring in that human factor and showing parents being shot in front of their children, and bodies being burned,'" recalls Cataldi.

Though Milius helped shape the world of *Homefront*, Kershner, responsible for most of the final dialogue in the game, never had any contact with the screenwriter. "I did not work personally with John," Kershner explains. "I can't say how much he was actually involved in early stages. I know he visited the studio a number of times and I also believe there were some calls – that's about the extent of it. There was a high-level design team that I know put together much of the back-story and world of *Homefront* with John and a former CIA analyst consulting."

THE STORY WOULD change a lot during development – while the premise stayed relatively similar, the process of outlining characterisation and dialogue was prolonged. One anonymous source we speak to believes the committee approach to the story had a detrimental effect on the clarity of development. "It went from something wholly internal, to Involving Milius, to a contract writer filtering Milius, to a rewrite with Danny's input, shades of Milius, and largely penned by internal staff again. On the Milius side of things, once he got involved, it took an extraordinary amount of time to get anything



THE CALL OF DUTY KILLERS

HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE THE OTHER GAMES THAT STOOD UP TO ACTIVISION?



MEDAL OF HONOR

Released: 2010

A plainly average shooter that used the idea of documenting soldier life as a hook, despite playing pretty much identically to *Call Of Duty*. *Medal Of Honor* wasn't nearly in the same ballpark sales-wise. Its sequel has not furthered that.

PLAY SCORE 86%

Estimated PS3 Sales 2.5 million

Call of Duty beaten? No



BATTLEFIELD 3

Released: 2011

Battlefield emerged as a major FPS player with *Bad Company 2*, and the third game has just grown and grown – the main contender to *COD*'s throne, we think it could match the series on sales in a few years' time.

PLAY SCORE

Estimated Sales 6 million

Call Of Duty beaten? Creatively, yes.

Commercially, one day it might...



BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

Released: 2008

Just as World War II was falling out of favour as a theme in the FPS genre, *Brothers In Arms* sidled up with a title that just felt a touch out of date.

PLAY SCORE 74%

Estimated PS3 Sales 900,000

Call Of Duty beaten? Sadly it was not, and we haven't seen the series since.



RESISTANCE 3

Released: 2011

Scaling back the multiplayer numerical madness of the second game, *Resistance 3* is consistently brilliant across single and multiplayer – but was sadly overlooked in the Christmas season, commercially squashed by *COD* and *Battlefield*.

PLAY SCORE

Estimated PS3 Sales 1.2 million

Call of Duty beaten? No (but creatively, maybe)



KILLZONE 3

Released: 2011

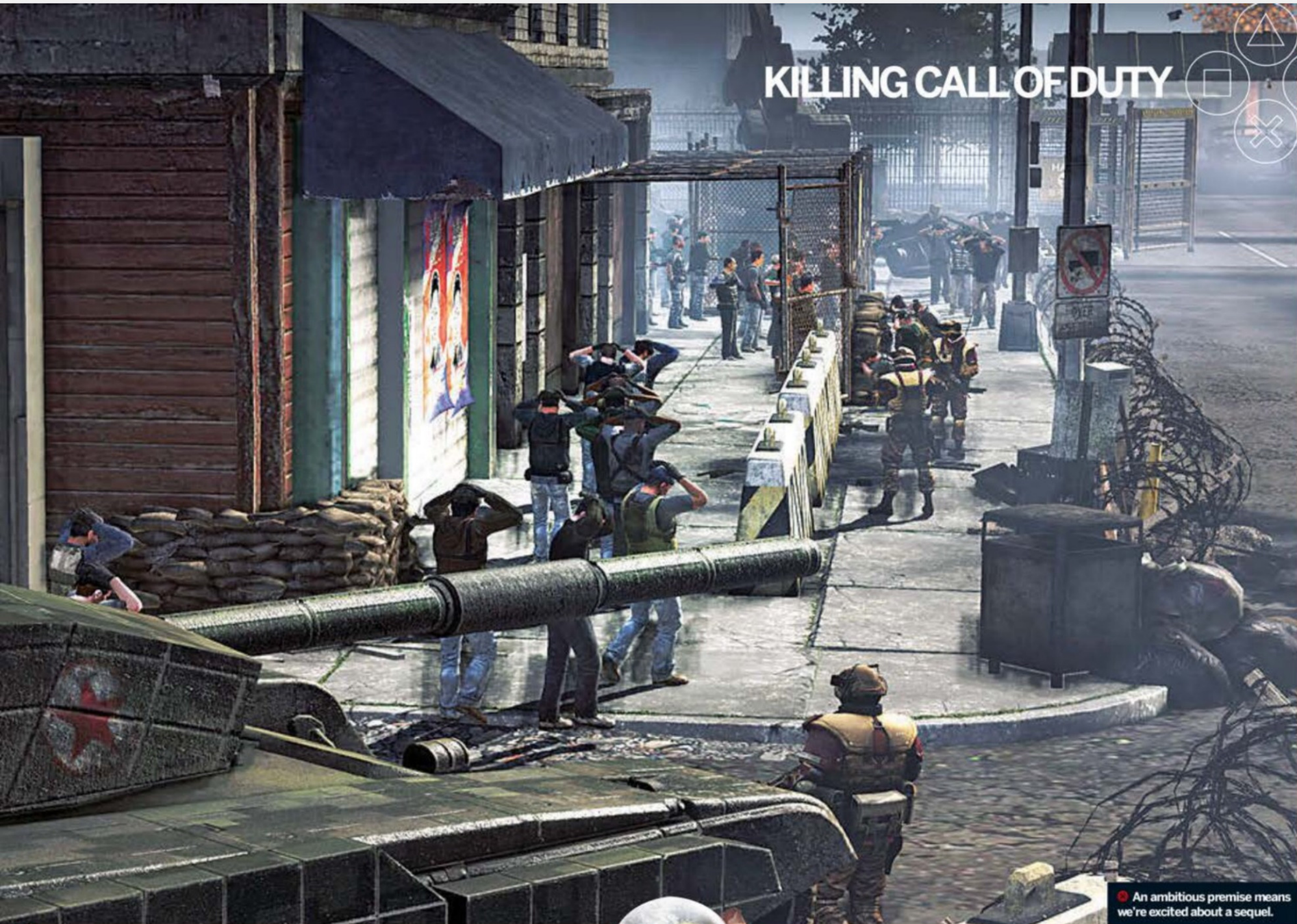
Killzone 3 didn't quite live up to its predecessor's sales numbers, despite a rather full-featured multiplayer mode and solid single-player campaign. Annoyingly, it and *Bulletstorm* were released on the same week, meaning attention was divided between the two.

PLAY SCORE

Estimated PS3 Sales 2.4 million

Call of Duty beaten? No





● An ambitious premise means we're excited about a sequel.

done on the levels side of things. The level design team was kept in a loop of prototypes for a long time because the process got stuck in a loop between Kaos, Milius, and THQ. A level brief would be sent to Milius, Milius would write something that was out of spec from a technical standpoint, Kaos would try to reconcile his ideas into something producible, and then THQ would have a crack at it, and then Kaos would get it back again."

At one point, we're informed that *Homefront* had more of an Eighties-style 'goofy' action movie tone, a far step away from the game that eventually emerged. But at some point, Danny Bilson's involvement changed the tone to something more serious, with characters redrawn to reflect that mentality – a decision that, based on our interviews, was likely prompted by the release of Rockstar's force-of-nature open world masterpiece, *Red Dead Redemption*, and the powerful depiction of its protagonist John Marston.

"During the development of *Homefront*, *Red Dead Redemption* came out," says Cataldi. "And one of the great things Rockstar did with that game in my opinion is they gave you that John Marston character, who was so believable, gritty and well-done that people were like, 'Well, our characters aren't that well-developed.'"

"I know that the VP of Core Games at the time, Danny Bilson, was a big fan of the game, but I can't think of any specific instances where things were changed because of that," says Kershner.

"John Marston actually influenced a lot of the characters in the single-player story of *Homefront*, because he was such a well-developed character and our characters had to have some of those attributes," adds Cataldi.



INDEED, MANY OF the characters were reconstructed within *Homefront* – Kershner stepped up in the process as a result of support from his colleagues and his own initiative. "Testing seemed to be the foot in the door," he explains. "Once I got in there, I just made a nuisance of myself to upper management, making it clear that was something I wanted to do, and I sent them a lot of spec scripts, just constantly pitching them things. I also had a lot of support internally, which was nice. Once I was in it was a real trial by fire – I stepped in, had not written a game of this sort before and was totally in over my head but enjoying every minute of it."

Kershner ended up taking over from a temporary contract writer, who just didn't have the time to tackle the story properly – he reflects positively on the atmosphere at Kaos, and is grateful for the opportunities it afforded him. "I feel like I was given – perhaps crazily by upper management – an enormous amount of creative control," he says. "Everyone was there, ready to make the best the game they could. It was not – at least I hope it was not – a one-way exchange. It was very much a collaboration. I had a very good experience working with the team there."

"I think Kaos Studios wanted to nail down a storyline that had more heart," says Jason Velez, who worked briefly at the studio in a testing capacity. "My experience with *Call Of Duty*, *Battlefield*, or any other military FPS on the market during this console cycle, all showed more emphasis towards multiplayer gaming with one or two shock value moments within the campaign. Kaos Studios had a roadmap with how they attempted to infuse those shock value moments throughout, but with more frequency and an emotional tinge to them." >



Ordinary people came under occupation in *Homefront*.

>The eventual scheduling of the game wasn't the problem – it was locking all the narrative content into place. "As for the production schedule, well, it was kind of always behind schedule," says our anonymous source. "At the beginning we switched from waterfall to a form of agile, and I actually think that this was generally beneficial. However in terms of overall scheduling, the story hiccups pushed a lot of things further back than we had wanted. Another side of the coin is something I didn't have a lot of visibility on and that was the programming side of things."

"We always felt as an art team that we were moving along nicely, but because the design team was undermanned, there was a bigger push to bring in more and more designers," says Cataldi, who left development around a year before the release of the game to take a key role at the Savannah College of Art and Design. "And of course, because you introduce new talent into the equation you introduce new ideas. After you go through a pre-production phase and you think you know where you're headed, when new ideas come around you constantly have to go, 'How are we going to pull that off as an art team? Do we have the resources to do that?'"

The picture painted by our interviewees indicate that Kaos wasn't a perfect working place – but none of our interviewees are especially negative about the atmosphere there, either. In one email exchange we had with former staff, a comparison was made to a high school social strata, a clique-led atmosphere heavy on in-fighting. These things can be subjective, of course – our interviewees seem to have had a broad range of positive and negative experiences within Kaos, which, it could be argued, comes with any high-pressure working environment. But realistically, circumstances were tough.

"From a leadership perspective, it was a really challenging title to work on because we wanted to work a lot," Cataldi explains. "There were a lot of players in it, and when you take 120-150 people to work together on something really complex and put a lot of pressure on them, of course it's going to be tough, especially if you've been working on it for three years."

"*Homefront* evolved in its design sometimes later than it probably should have," Cataldi continues. "Part of that is the maturity of the team and part of that is the challenge of having enough money to make something that competitive. That puts stress on the team, and at the end of the day we all have to do what we need to do to get to where we have to be. And it's tough when you're working 10, 12, 14 hours, seven days a week, you get tired of seeing the same people. But we all focus on the work as best possible and try and keep the work out of there." A reality of the arduous process and crunch that comes with making a videogame, then? "Correct."

The development of the game was sped up towards the end of development as THQ drafted contractors in to help the title meet its milestones – Kaos hit every one, as the game needed to drop before the end of THQ's fiscal year. "Though I know Danny very much wanted to give us the time we needed to deliver a competitive and winning game," Cataldi explains. "We eventually had to ship based on the fiscal year or THQ would have a hard time meeting the goals of the board. You can't always have it all."

BY THE END of development, Kaos had cultivated a lot of talented new staff. Next came the game's release, in which *Homefront* was greeted with lukewarm reviews, the critical consensus focusing on weaknesses in the single-player, particularly length, but praising the accomplished dynamic



Multiplayer got a lot more kudos than the main campaign did.



Angry chap Connor was our least favourite character in the game.

multiplayer element of the title. We awarded it 69% – a well above average score, and we were impressed by the visual interpretation of this damaged, occupied America. The game shipped 2.4 million copies and sold 1 million within its release window. A great performance in spite of the reviews, buoyed by strong marketing support from THQ, but sadly far from a guarantee of the studio's safety.

Cataldi explains, "Because THQ owned us and because THQ had a bottom line, they were more interested in us selling units than I think preserving the studio culture – and that's a call they have to make. They're investing a great deal of money into *Homefront* and also, did we need to have a studio in Midtown Manhattan that cost as much as it did to run? Probably not. Was it a good idea to stay in Midtown Manhattan with 150 developers to make competitive FPSs? Probably not. Plenty of things put that writing on the wall."

Because THQ owned us and because THQ had a bottom line, they were more interested in us selling units than I think preserving the studio culture – and that's a call they have to make

KAOS WAS CLOSED three months after the game shipped on June 13, 2011. THQ has been investing more and more in Canadian development, where tax breaks aid the games industry enormously, a far cry from Kaos's pricey Manhattan offices. Kershner, who now works for Ubisoft on *Rainbow Six: Patriots*, was crushed by the closure.

"It was heartbreaking," says Kershner. "Even now looking back, Kaos had its own challenges but it was a really wonderful and unique place to work. New York had no other big developer owned by a publisher – now there's Avalanche. Rockstar doesn't do development there but they do motion-capture. Some people were burning out. There was sort of a general melancholy about the studio, the future was very uncertain. I don't know that it was inevitable – it's hard looking back to see it any other way. A studio in New York employing 100 people is expensive."

Homefront might not have been able to compete with *Call Of Duty* critically or commercially in the end, but THQ had a hit, something the company was in dire need of, as well a property with an enormous amount of future potential. It's now down to Crytek UK, formerly known as Free Radical, to craft *Homefront 2* – the team at Kaos had 'blue-sky' discussions and preliminary plans for a sequel before it was closed down, and several of our interviewees are curious to see if their ideas will live on in the new game.

Either way, Kaos' struggles in making *Homefront* proved how hard it is to create a competitive FPS in a market that has increasingly become a two-horse race between super-refined blockbusters – *Homefront* at least attempted something a bit different conceptually, and there are lessons to be learned from its development. A lot of talented people crossed paths with Kaos, many who have gone on to work for top-tier developers like Infinity Ward, Crystal Dynamics and Insomniac. Taking on *Call Of Duty* clearly proved to be worth it for many Kaos alumni.

"It's becoming increasingly apparent to me that you can't beat *Call Of Duty*," reflects Kershner. "It's just not going to happen. They've got millions – from what I've heard – at least \$100 million a title, up to six studios, god knows how many people. They have an engine they've been working on for the past ten years. The veterans there know that tech inside and out." ☒



HOMEFRONT 2: HOMEFRONTIER

WHAT OUR INTERVIEWEES SAY ABOUT THE CRYTEK UK-DEVELOPED SEQUEL

"THERE'S QUITE A lot of power in *Homefront*'s premise," says CJ Kershner when we ask him about *Homefront 2*. "I'm very much looking forward to Crytek UK's [take on it], I can't wait to see what they do with it." It's an overwhelming consensus that we get from our interviewees: this is an intellectual property with a real future ahead of it.

"My only worry is whether the storyline will become an afterthought in favour of the same tropes that have infiltrated the military FPS sub-genre," speculates Jason Velez. "But, when you see the resume of Free Radical/Crytek UK, you really have to feel that the outlook on *Homefront 2* will definitely be promising."

Our anonymous source wonders if some of the team's late ideas will filter down into the sequel. "At the end of *Homefront*, when people were leaving in droves, and all we had to do was work on DLC, there was a small group of us working on an single-player prototype for *Homefront 2*. I'm curious to see if there's any of that in what Free Radical come up with. I do think there's potential in the *Homefront* IP."

As for Luis Cataldi, he's curious if Crytek's renowned technology would've solved a few issues the team faced throughout development. "I loved *Homefront* – I put a lot of passion into it. We developed a pretty massive art bible and style guide, and I hope they're still using it and they're still maintaining the core tenets and goals, and building on the successes at Kaos. From what I've heard they're doing a really great job. I don't know if they're doing it in the CryEngine, but I think it's a great engine – I would love to have worked with it."



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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale

Clash of the titles



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
SuperBot Entertainment
Price
£39.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Beat-'em-up
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.playstation-allstarsbattleroyale.com
Twitter
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facebook.com/PlayStation



What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? Why did the dinosaurs really die out? And is there life on other planets? All of these pressing questions pale next to the real big issue facing mankind – that's right, who would win in a fight between Kratos and Nathan Drake? It's been keeping us awake at night for far too long now, a discussion destined to be forced in circles for eternity by factors such as Kratos' mortality and how much Nolan North's voice can be considered an advantage. Until now, at least. Sony has clearly heard our pleas for enlightenment and closure and offered the tools with which to simulate that very showdown, with what scientists are calculating to be 'at least nine per cent accuracy'. Oh, glorious day. Now get it on, you two. We want a good, clean fight. We've been waiting years for this.

Only we won't get a good, clean fight. We'll get a confusing, explosive scrap in the middle of a *Resistance* level in which, at some point, somebody is going to get hit with a fish. And having seen how that pans out, we're absolutely fine with it. Sure, it might be lacking the scientific insight of an episode of *Deadliest Warrior* – and indeed the wildly unnecessary amount of blood – but what *Battle Royale*

does brilliantly is to make pitting the stars of the PlayStation scene against one another fun. And as a videogame, it's hard to ask more of it than that.

Taking its cues from Nintendo's hugely popular *Super Smash Bros* series of crossover fighters, *Battle Royale* brings together 20 of the characters most synonymous with PlayStation for an almighty ruck in which anything can and will happen. That's the plan, at least, but the relatively meagre roster isn't exactly as all-encompassing as it could or indeed should be. When *MVC3* and *Tekken Tag 2* offer 50+ characters a pop, *All-Stars'* character select screen can't help but feel malnourished. And when you realise that two of the 20 characters are variants of Cole from *InFamous*, it only seems worse. Ten per cent of your characters are Cole. That's not good, guys.

Even some of the guest stars have to have their cases argued although to be fair, that generally isn't difficult. *Tekken* is clearly a PlayStation-centric brand and who better to represent it than Heihachi Mishima. Dante made three PS2 outings before even considering appearing on other formats, even if it is the spritely young thing from *Ninja Theory's* reboot that appears here. And similarly, Raiden



Kratos isn't cheap – he's just extremely affordable. Is there a difference? Probably.

Floaty and nonsense as it may be, *Battle Royale* is far more enjoyable than it has any right to be

seems an odd choice until you realise that it was PSone classic *Metal Gear Solid* that turned the brand into a household name. The only real interloper is the Big Daddy, coming straight out of that famously PlayStation-central game *BioShock*... yeah. His stage is even one from *BioShock Infinite* which, as far as we're aware, doesn't even have Big Daddies in it. It just feels like an advert for the franchise rather than a celebration of PlayStation's undeniably grand history, which is what this ought to be.

And, to a fair extent, what it is, too. Just about every familiar face from a good 15 years of PlayStation history has come out to play. Drake, Kratos, Sly, Ratchet, Toro and PaRappa are joined by more recent additions to the family like Cole and Fat Princess but it's a strong showing all the same, if perhaps one with a few glaring holes. Given both the desire to celebrate PlayStation and the open door policy on letting in third-party stars, where are the likes of Lara Croft and Cloud Strife? And where is the representation, be it through stage presence or a lesser cameo, for other brands born or raised on PlayStation, such as *Gran Turismo*, *Crash Bandicoot*, *Grand Theft Auto* and *Monster Hunter*? Hell, even the sublime *WipEout* franchise – something that couldn't be more PlayStation if it tried – only makes it to the party in the form of a shield item. It deserves better, frankly.

But please, don't take this checklist of missing games, characters and elements to be a damning assessment of the game. As much as it may be missing out on celebrating many of the moments and franchises that make PlayStation gaming what it is, *Battle Royale*



Level Three Super Attacks are quite the spectacle.



That's funny – we don't remember *LocoRoco* having any giant robots in it...



CROSS-BUY, HAPPY GAMER

A free Vita version? Ta very much...

PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS *Battle Royale* is the first game to feature in Sony's Cross-Buy program, in which PS3 games that offer cross-platform play with Vita players will also come with a free version of the same game for the handheld. To all intents and purposes, the Vita version is identical to its big brother – graphically, it takes a slight hit but competition between the two formats has meant that Sony has had to deliver a comparable experience in order to not give one side an unfair advantage. The only real difference we picked up on, in fact, was the use of the touch screen (rather than an absent shoulder button) to pick up items and while it might have been nice to see some of the crazier Supers take advantage of Vita's additional potential, we'd rather just have an experience that offers a level playing field across the two platforms. Which it does. Splendid.



Stage changes really help keep you on your toes, though they do get a little predictable.



Two points for a kill, minus one for a death. It's a simple system but it really works well.

MATCH SUMMARY			
Player 1	Dante	Ratchet	Jak
P1 / TEAM 1	P2 / TEAM 2	P3 / TEAM 3	P4 / TEAM 4
7	8		
SCORE 20	SCORE -4	SCORE 0	SCORE -1
KILLS: 11	KILLS: 1	KILLS: 2	KILLS: 1
DEATHS: 2	DEATHS: 6	DEATHS: 4	DEATHS: 3
L1			
R1			
ADVANCE			

certainly gets it right in terms of fundamentals and this deserves to be recognised. Four-player arena combat games are notoriously tough to get right and outside of Nintendo's offering, it's tough to name one that has even come close (sit down, *Power Stone 2* – you were glorious). But the same I-don't-get-it accusations that are often levelled at *Smash Bros* are every bit as applicable here. At first glance, it's a button-mashy, unbalanced mess of different gameplay styles that can never work. But for once, it actually does.

While regular fighters put the emphasis on depleting life bars, and *Smash Bros* is all about building up damage percentages before fishing for that one knockout blow, *Battle Royale* introduces a basic yet novel concept that none of its rivals has attempted.

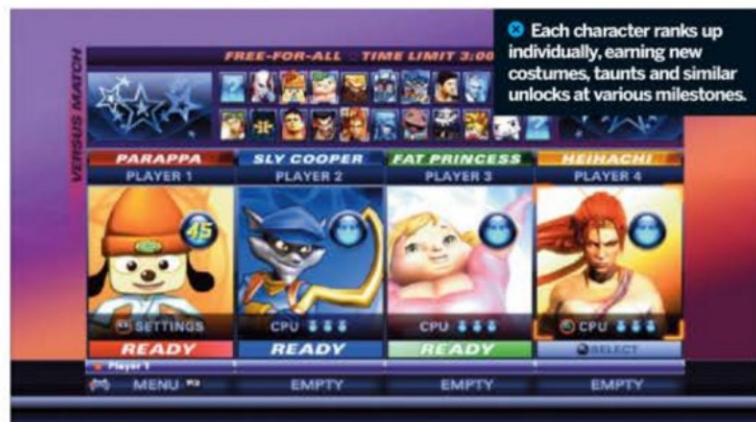
Regular attacks and combos don't weaken the opponent, rather amass AP for the attacking party – build up enough and you'll eventually be ready to unleash a Super Attack, the only way to do away with an opponent and score points. These come in three flavours. The basic Level One variety tends to be a localised assault, Level Two an area attack and Level Three a win move that clears the stage, though they vary by character – some fighters have an emphasis on spamming low level specials to earn kills slowly while others focus on building up to one potentially game-winning Level Three Super.

And that's the beauty of the game. While Spike and Sly players will abuse stun moves and invincibility respectively to rinse their Level Ones, Kratos for one can do so much damage with a maxed-out meter that he has to be taken





Sly's Parisian stage is as bouncy and cartoon-like as you'd hope.



Each character ranks up individually, earning new costumes, taunts and similar unlocks at various milestones.



The story is nonsense. Here, Sweet Tooth is outraged that Kratos has made him drop his ice cream. Riilight...



It's worth playing PaRappa just to make other players sit through his rap when you hit his Level Three.



Spike can stun other fighters easily, setting up easy Level One Supers. With all his gadgets, he's tricky to use, though.

on in a completely different way. A lot of it comes down to the quality of the opposition: blocking may not work against Supers but a well-timed dodge can sink through even the most powerful attack, meaning that skilled players are able to evade power-up Supers like Kratos' and Dante's far better than they can the instant kill smart bomb that is PaRappa's rap nuke. The dodge move, in fairness, is what separates a good *All-Stars* player – someone that has mastered a few high-AP combos – from a great one, and rolling or sliding past a Level Three is every bit as empowering and satisfying as it should be. Oh, and it's the difference between winning and losing more often than not, making it a crucial skill to master.

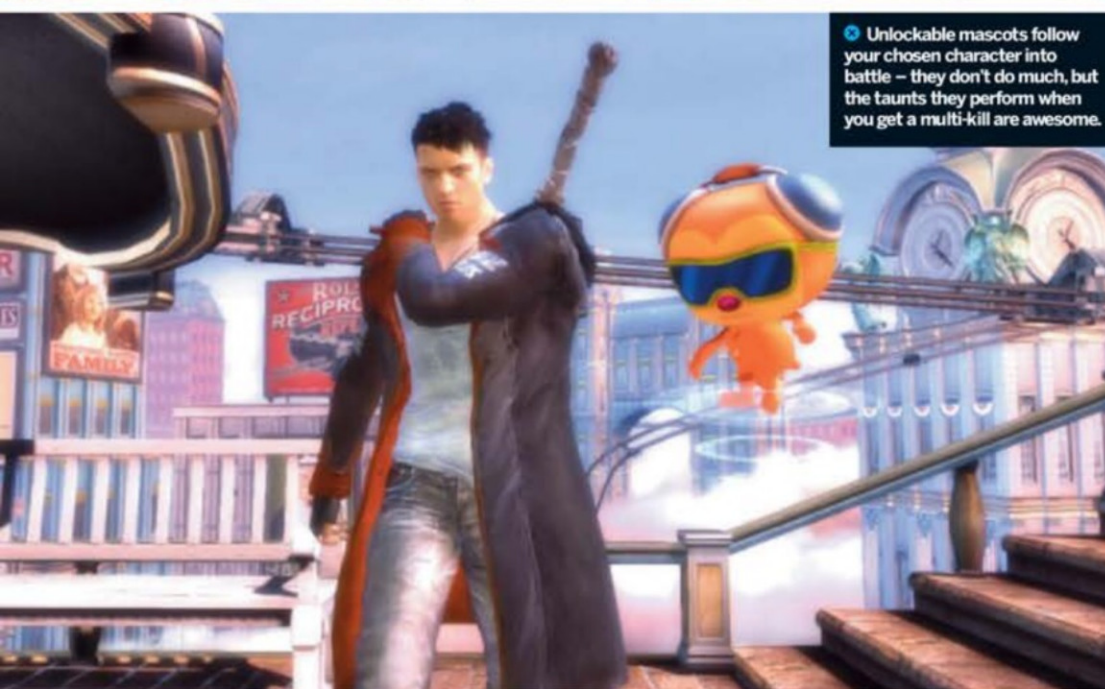
Trouble is, outside of multiplayer battles, there's not all that much reason to even bother getting good. Combo trials are a welcome addition that give a decent introduction to what each character can do but they're wildly

Grudges are dredged up from the most nonsensical of lakes to create rivalries where there clearly are none

impractical – it's all well and good knowing how to put the hurt on an opponent but doing it when Cole is raining electric death on you is an entirely different matter. And beyond training and the regular single-player battles – where grudges are dredged up from the most nonsensical of lakes to create rivalries where there clearly are none – there's really not a lot to the single-player aspect of the game.

It's a harsh criticism to level at a fighting game – something so clearly designed to be enjoyed with company, be it present or distant – but a fair one nonetheless. If you're not looking to take your chosen fighter online, there's simply not much to this bare-bones fighter. Like the best of its breed, it's fuelled by competition and there's only so much you can play against the computer, whether you set it





to 'awful' or 'cheat until I win', before you need something more. If you're looking for single player unlockables as you might find in the likes of *Mortal Kombat*, you'll not find them here. There are extra outfits, win poses and all that junk to unlock but if you're sticking to your own company, these are largely pointless.

Still, as floaty and nonsense as it may be, *Battle Royale* is far more enjoyable than it has any right to be. Whether you're siding with Sackboy and spewing crazy all over the level, picking Drake and killing your unlikely opponents with priceless artifacts or just picking one of the hardcore action crew and mashing buttons until you find their trademark combos, this underattended showdown is a joy to be a part of.

Yes, it could do with being a slightly more all-encompassing celebration of all things PlayStation. But hopefully, the coming weeks and months will see the roster and the playgrounds available bulked up with additional DLC, something we'd be more than happy to support if and when the right

characters offered their services in kicking Cole (both of him) in the face.

If you're not online and don't do much in the way of local multiplayer, your cash is far better deserved by other, more solo-focused triple-A greats of recent months. *XCOM* says hello, by the way. But if you're down with the idea of representing your favourite character against opponents from all over the world, *All-Stars* is a barrel of laughs and a surprisingly tight fighter. In its own daft little way it is, anyway.

Oh, and the answer is Kratos, by the way. Kratos wins. Obviously. He's a god, silly.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

A little light on characters and modes perhaps but all the same, *Battle Royale* is great fun. If you're looking for a balanced, fair fighter then you might want to cast your eyes elsewhere but those in it for the lols will find more than their fair share here.

80%

SETTING THE STAGE

What a lovely place to have a fight

IT'S NOT JUST the characters doing the whole crossover thing - even the backgrounds get in on the action. Each is a combination of two familiar franchises, from a cheery *LocoRoco* stage that gets ripped apart by a Metal Gear Ray to the depth of the Underworld, where Hades meets a sticky end at the hands of a bunch of singing Patapon. Best of the lot by far, though, is the *LittleBigPlanet* stage, the PopIt used by an invisible force to build a level while you fight, culminating in an impromptu quiz round as Buzz swaggers in to pose a few PlayStation-related teasers. Wonderful stuff.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Assassin's Creed III

Historical problems for a historical series

PS3 As graceful as an eagle, the very symbol of a certain new nation, floating from rooftop to rooftop beyond most prying eyes, jumping... jumping... *jumping*. Hang on, he's got stuck again. *Assassin's Creed III* may well be powered by the AnvilNext engine, but this iteration hasn't done much to iron out old faults – five-year-old faults.

Free running is one of the central features of all the *Assassin's* titles, and it's no different with *ACIII*. It's always been graceful and fulfilling, but a mite flaky when it comes to corners, edges and some smaller items to hop over. We expected it to be a more satisfying experience this time around. It is, in some ways – but the same problems rear their heads: jarring the first four times around, downright irritating the fifth. You will get stuck in animation loops on some walls, you will attempt – repeatedly – to mount an unmountable wall because the system hasn't bothered paying attention to the change in direction on the analogue stick you have implemented in order to avoid being stuck in this loop (that you're stuck in).

Essentially, *Assassin's Creed III* plays on autopilot in the most part, and whenever things go wrong it's near impossible to blame anything other than the game itself. Things do go wrong, and they go wrong enough that it's just downright irritating. Five years. *Five years to fix it*. And that's before we even get to the massive identity crisis on show here, but more on that later.

Back to basics though: this is the third 'proper' entry to the *Assassin's* series and the first time we've seen a new protagonist since Ezio's introduction in 2009. We'll overlook the spoilerific minor revelation of the opening and go straight to this: you play as Ratonhnhaké:ton, soon given the far less exciting title of Connor, as he tries to make his way in the world as an assassin, taking on the Templars, encountering sci-fi bunk, dealing with family issues and generally stabbing a lot of people. It's a slow burner and you do expect a fair bit from it, but unfortunately



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Montreal
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
18+
Website
assassinscreed.ubi.com
Twitter
@assassinscreed
Facebook
facebook.com/assassinscreed



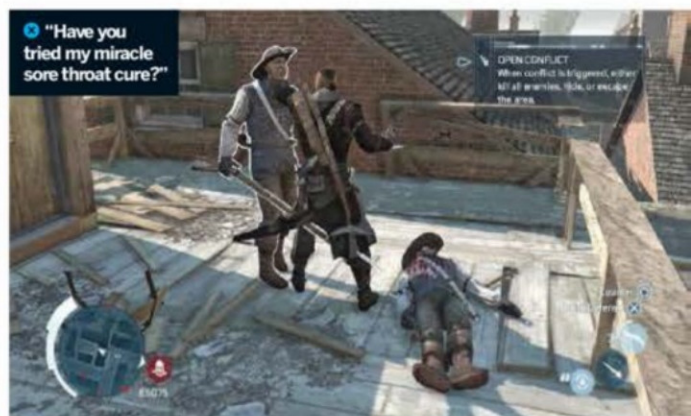
when it does get going Connor's back story just feels like a best-of from the TV Tropes website. Absent father? Check. Burned village? Check. Dead mother he tried to but couldn't save? Check. Man involved in murdering his people one of the main villains in the piece and a Templar? Check. None of it is surprising, bar one brief (literal) "Wait, what?" moment about five hours in.

This is because the opening five hours is basically introductory – far more linear than the rest of the game reveals itself to be and a bit too drawn out for its own good. Still, it does a job of setting things up, even if that set up lasts about the same length of time the entirety of *Call Of Duty's* single-player campaigns tend to be. And let's not go into

There's an accomplished, confident approach to things it's impossible to entirely write off

having the concept of notoriety explained after five hours, when you've been dealing with the concept directly for five hours.

Anyway, back to that setting. *ACIII* takes in 30 years, before, during and to the end of the American Revolutionary War. During this time you will see cities change, the seasons go from temperate to snowy and back again, people grow older and relationships develop. But this system of time passing has a weird proclivity for not really acknowledging the time that passes. There are times a conversation is continued





Assassin's Creed III



Counter [X]
Human Shield [X]
Yellow icons indicate an enemy is about to shoot. In other words: he's bugged.

as if it ended minutes ago, when a caption has clearly just said "Six months later". This confusion in itself isn't confined to one area though – for example towards the end of the game Connor acknowledges in his narration that certain people have 'moved on', but then apparently learns this information afterwards in an epilogue mission. He reacts to this with shock. Even though he's already told the player it happened. It's confusing for him, it's confusing for the player and it smacks of an unclear direction to the game. It's not a huge problem, but it brings you out of the experience and as such is an annoyance.

One massive issue we take with *Assassin's Creed III*, though, is its complete lack of challenge. Yes, there's a hell of a lot of game in there. Dozens of hours, if you allow yourself to be taken in by it. But none of it – bar one of the very last missions – provides anything approaching difficulty or challenge. And that mission only serves to highlight just how flawed a system the game is built around – when it's so utterly incapable of nuance, featuring a movement system based in absolutes and with no subtlety, there can be no challenge. There can be right or wrong. On or off. Hit or miss. There's a reason it's so very easy to get through 99 per cent of the game: there's no way the studio can make *Assassin's Creed III* a game that challenges the player without it feeling unfair – and >

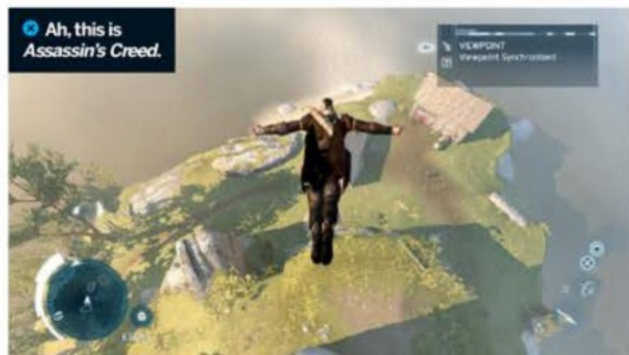


EPIC BATTLES

Minus epic, minus most of the 'battles'

'Thousands of units on screen' is not a lie, we suppose, but the 'epic' battles we were promised are half-baked at best, downright bad at worst. A few of them pop up through the game and require the player – for some reason co-opted as a temporary general – to aim cannons, give attack orders and hide behind cover. What this translates to is mowing down rows of slow-moving, identical Redcoats who all politely go and stand in just three or four positions on the battlefield. It does, at times, verge on absolutely awful – mercifully it only shows its face sparingly.





> chasing down the enemy at the end of the game makes this point stand out like the sorest of thumbs.

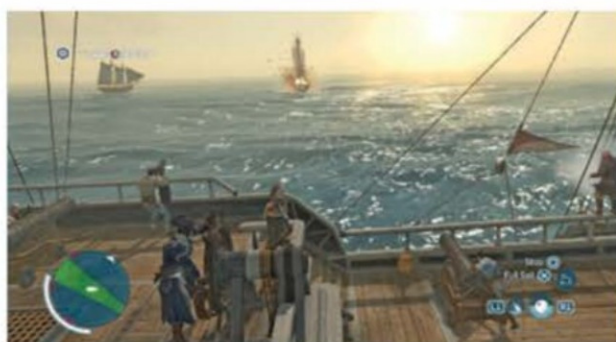
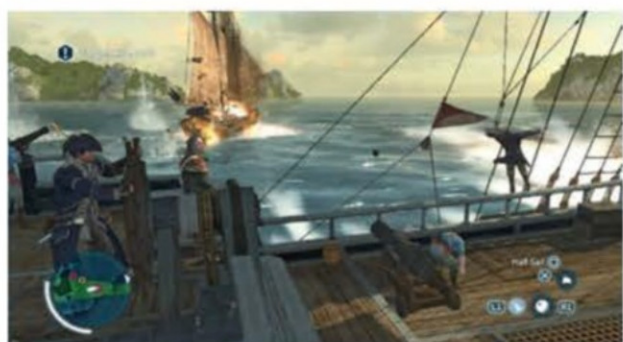
Most of these problems stem from a simplification – control has always felt like something wrested from the player in order to make things look better, rather than play better. *ACIII* takes it to another level, stripping free running down to just the one button. On one hand, it's a lot easier than the stick-and-two-buttons system of before. On the other hand, it means you're liable to fall into a coma while playing through lack of interaction on your part.

And this does, unfortunately, spread to combat. We were told pre-release that there would be 'less turtling', meaning players wouldn't just stand and defend, waiting to counter. That much is true, but only because instead you stand still *not* defending, simply tapping counter then square to kill the majority of enemies you face. Those that can't be taken down like this? Well, modify your deep strategy (it's not a deep strategy) to countering then pressing X to disarm, before attacking. It's simplified to the point of being insulting and, as a result, ends up rather boring.

But *Assassin's Creed III* isn't a bad game – it's just yet another disappointing videogame case of diminishing returns. We don't want to seem too down on it; it's just critique borne of intense frustration. Frustration at a game that could be so much more. A game that could treat players as intelligent, rather than one-button-pressing mouth-breathers with the attention span of a... ooh, a shiny thing!

If you want yourself to be taken on a ride; to play a game made for a lazy Sunday afternoon – that's when *Assassin's Creed III* is at its absolute best. When you don't care to be challenged in any way, when all you want is to make people die quickly and easily before scampering off across colonial rooftops – that's when *Assassin's Creed III* finds its place. In fact, that's when the *AC* series as a whole is at its best. That's when it's easiest to

NAVAL-GAZING Yo ho ho and a bottle of fun



The naval element of *Assassin's Creed III* is, like we said in the main text, interesting. It's enjoyable in a rather shallow (pun!) way and provides a fun distraction from the main draw of running and stabbing. Players captain their own ship: steering, hoisting and... un... hoisting sails, firing cannons, boarding enemies and generally making a nautical nuisance of themselves. It's another element that isn't challenging – at least once you've

got the hang of the rather basic mechanics of broadsiding the enemy – but it does work surprisingly well.

What we don't understand, however, is why it's even in the game in the first place. Naval combat was a big element of the Revolutionary War, no doubt, but from a storyline perspective it's hard to take the leap from a young Native American man becoming a part of an ancient assassins'

order to suddenly being allowed to captain his own ship after being on board for about 20 minutes.

Though admittedly this is questioning that leap of logic in a game where a man sits in a magic chair to travel through time and ancient AIs talk to Nathan Drake who has to use an apple to help save the world. Also Q from *Star Trek* is his dad.

So actually it makes perfect sense.



ignore the fact you're playing something that still feels like it's five years old.

And in those moments there's a bizarre feeling of prosaic joy – the feeling of it all coming together. The flowing, balletic experience of free running has never really lost its appeal, the ease with which you can dispose of dozens of enemies serves as a tremendous power trip, and the ability to just ignore your objectives and search for hidden feathers, chests, trinkets and suchlike can be a fine way to spend a few hours should you so choose. There is fun to be had; there is a massive timesink to be had should you have both the inclination and – obviously – the time.

Special mention has to go to the world created by the team at Ubi Montreal. Connor's Homestead, the cities of Boston and New York, the open sea and – especially – the wild, untamed frontier are all exceptionally well realised. Each has a strong identity of its own (it's easy to tell which one is the ocean, mind) and is capable of that bizarre

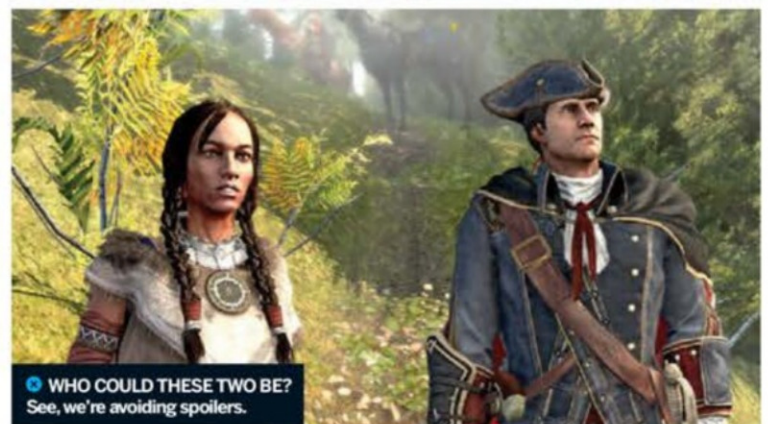
thing some games can do: it makes you have favourite places to go. Though admittedly our favourites tended to be pubs. Ah well.

It is a gigantic game world, too. While not quite pushing to the limits that *Just Cause 2* set, *Assassin's Creed III* provides

Just because you can put it in the game, doesn't mean you should put it in the game

a playground of land and sea that will take hours just to see all of it. There is fast travel available – and you will use it, no doubt – but there are times when you just want to jog it in, when you just want to go sightseeing and take the scenic route to your next objective. Or when you want to dive off a cliff into a lake before stabbing a bear, obviously.

Second special mention should go to the period in which things are set, if only for the old world insults thrown around and the fact at one point someone is called a "knobend". Though there are cases of monumental overacting, like in the case of Edward 'The Bulldog' Braddock. Still, our fears *ACIII* would just be a vehicle for wailing on the Brits





> weren't founded in absolute truth – while Connor works solely on the Continental army side of things, it's not a clear cut case of 'just killing Brits'. Which is nice.

In fact, it's hard to nail down what *Assassin's Creed III* 'just' is, as there's a ridiculous amount of things to do beyond stabbing hundreds of men to death. This serves as something of a mixed blessing, it has to be said. You can upgrade your Homestead – your base of operations – by completing missions, which earn artisans who move into the area and provide materials with which you can trade or create items with.

Completing further missions – breaking up fights (rubbish), herding pigs (irritating), hunting a cougar (fun) – unlocks even more items to be produced on the Homestead to be made into other things (guns, clothes, consumables, hunting items and so on). It's all optional and is little more than a distraction, but it can be fun just as with

earlier management elements in the *AC* titles. Then you've got the traditional collectibles – feathers, trinkets, treasure chests and the like – another optional element that can eat up a lot of time if you really want it to. Or just if you let it. Similarly the courier and delivery missions that sporadically pop up can eat into precious minutes if you allow them to, the sneaky buggers.

You can liberate areas of the cities. Connor dashes about by taking on missions that activate as you pass by – allowing starving children to steal food, killing tax collectors or putting down rabid dogs, for example. Completing these helps unlock extra assassins to add to your fraternity, all of whom can be called on or sent on missions just as has been the case since *AC: Brotherhood*.

Hunting was pushed as a big element of *ACIII*, but it's too shallow to be anything more than a vague distraction – something you rely on when you want a bit of extra coin from selling beaver pelts or just a bit of wolf-killing to pass the time. It's not in-depth or complex enough to warrant anything like gushing praise, with the manner in which you kill the majority of animals the same: drop bait, wait, stab. And this stuff about Connor only killing 'what he needs', as is the Native American way? We saw none of that, in fact only getting a warning for killing a 'domesticated' farm animal. Yes, we stabbed a pig.

And we're not even done listing what you can do. There's so much more to play around with, like replaying missions in order to achieve full sync (remember when you couldn't do that in *ACII* because of 'a glitch in the animus'? Sigh), which of course

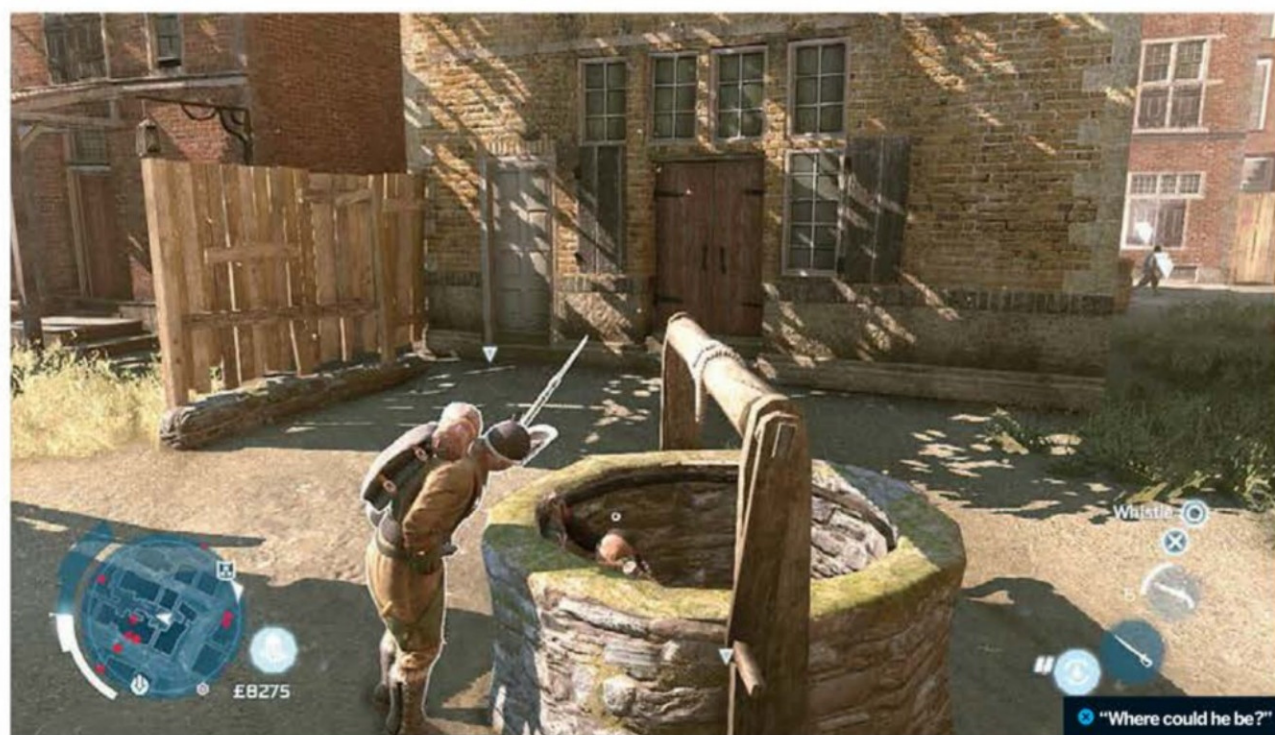


contributes to your quest to 100 per cent the game. If you can be bothered.

Then you get the naval elements – an important factor in the American War Of Independence no doubt, and these sections provide an excuse to get out on the rather beautiful open sea. They're an interesting addition and one that we felt the need to shunt to a boxout, so you can read about them there. Go do that.

That's a lot of elements, and not one of them is really *that* satisfying beyond a very superficial level. It's the identity crisis we spoke of earlier and it confuses more than it entertains. Why the hell is Connor made captain of a ship about thirty seconds after going on a boat for the first time in his life? Why is an assassin about to take down the Templars trying to get a date for Norris (aside from being rewarded with iron ore and sulphur – no, really)? Why would you want to air assassinate a hare? We're not saying you can't lose time to these elements, we're just saying they are – in the main part – pointless and take away from the central experience.

But there's such an accomplished, confident approach to things it's impossible to entirely write off *Assassin's Creed III*. Sure, it might be vague in its explanations, having you fail a mission for being spotted when there's barely even a hint that's the case. And of course, there are the similar – if not identical – problems to previous games that pop up all over the place and drag you out of the experience. But there's so much there – such a well-realised world to explore, such satisfying (if you can handle the simplicity and put up with the ease) combat, it's just





such a big budget production it's hard not to be impressed. At times.

There's a lot to love about *Assassin's Creed III*, but there's a lot to be annoyed with, to be confused by, to be irritated about because it hasn't changed in five years. When a fault shows up in the first game of a series, you can write it off as an unfortunate mistake – it'll get fixed. Second time around, you'd be less lenient. But fifth? That's just silly. And while there aren't any game-breaking legacy faults on show, the fact they've been around so long and not even a much-vaunted engine upgrade has fixed them gives us huge pause. Pause for thought. Pause for consideration. Pause for realisation that this is a project of sporadic, superficial joy punctuated repeatedly with frustration, irritation and the feeling that you've seen it all before.

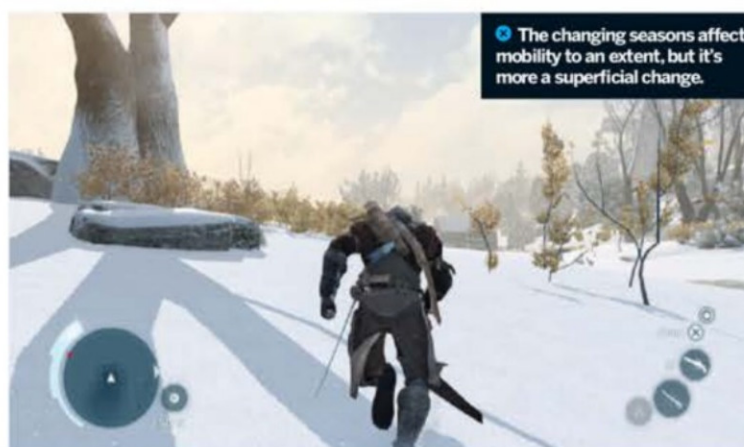
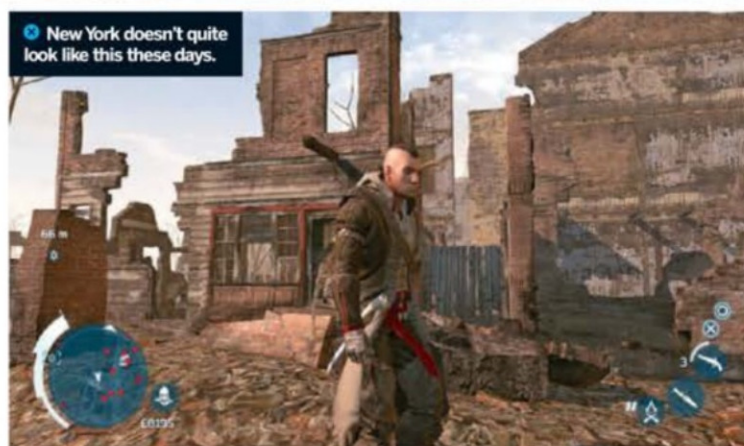
It's a huge experience, no doubt, but just because you *can* put it in the game, doesn't mean you *should* put it in the game. *Assassin's Creed III* should become shorthand for that very sentiment. And it's a shame, because while it is very good, it could have been so much more than it is.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Some interesting and fitting additions don't entirely save an ageing formula from feeling stale. *Assassin's Creed III* is fun and can provide a massive timesink should you give it the chance, but it's a disappointing update all things considered, with all the pre-release promises made.

78%



FABLE[D] PUB GAMES

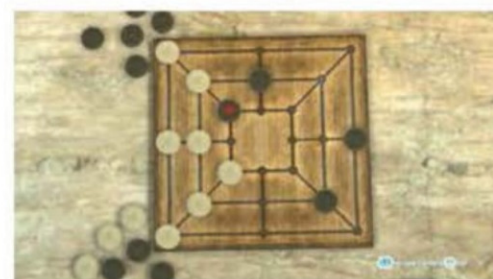
Bored of stabbing?
Play some pub games instead



CHECKERS

WHAT YOU DO: Play that weird diagonally-chess-thing that we Brits call draughts. Inevitably hit a stalemate and call a draw.

IS IT FUN? Yes, until you hit that stalemate we mentioned above.



TWELVE MEN'S MORRIS

WHAT YOU DO: Put your pieces on a board, try to match lines of three, slide bits around, get frustrated as the computer pulls moves you didn't realise were allowed.

IS IT FUN? No, not really.



NINE MEN'S MORRIS

WHAT YOU DO: The same as Twelve Men's, but with fewer spaces on which to place your pieces and slide them around.

IS IT FUN? More so than the bigger version, as you're less likely to make mistakes.



FANORONA

WHAT YOU DO: Move pieces around, take enemy pieces from the direction you move to or from, again get caught out by an all-knowing AI.

IS IT FUN? Yes, especially when you link together a big chain.



BOWLS

WHAT YOU DO: Lob balls. Win.

IS IT FUN? Yes, because winning is fun.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Assassin's Creed III: Liberation

Ubisoft turns your Vita into a portable Animus. But is everything permitted?

VITA Vita's promise is to offer console quality games on the go. Yet during your first half-hour with *Liberation* all you'll notice is where it falls short of its PS3 cousin. Low-res graphics, the simplified combat, the smaller world, the shorter missions. But by the time the title has appeared against a gorgeous amber sunrise, you may well have stopped seeing these as negatives.

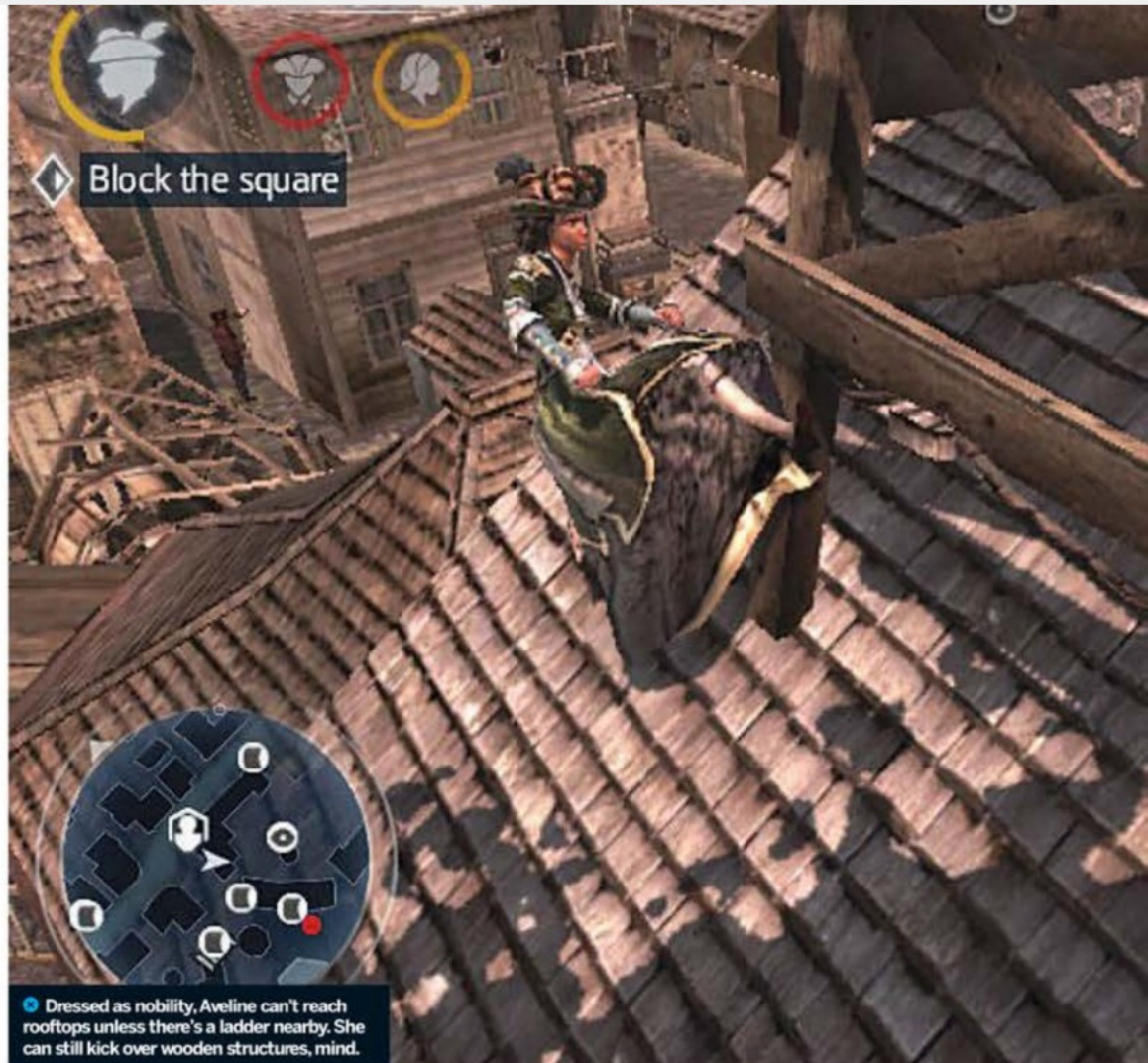
First, those visuals. Yes, they're a little fuzzy around the edges. Sure, the frame-rate isn't all it could be. But the trade-off is some great animation on protagonist Aveline, and some fabulous lighting. Its world feels authentically alive as a result, and after a while you'll grow accustomed to its soft-focus feel.

The combat, meanwhile – at least at close quarters – takes its cues from *ACIII*'s block-and-counter system, but enemies are easier to defeat. Aveline actually feels a little more responsive than Connor, and guards aren't quite so infuriatingly efficient at parrying your blows. It means encounters are over quicker so you can move on with your next objective. This approach is well suited to a handheld console, where games tend to be played in shorter bursts.

Liberation's world, split between a dilapidated New Orleans, a swampy bayou and onto leafy Mexico, is still sizeable, but a lot quicker to navigate than the console game's cities. Put it this way: there's no need for a fast-travel system here. Yet there's still an impressive sense of scale, not least from the many viewpoints you'll need to synchronise from to open up environmental features and missions.

Talking of missions, they're over quicker than you can say 'alligator assassination' (and yes, that really is a feature). There are few sequences where you're asked to cross the entire map to reach a waypoint, and checkpoints are frequent and generous. There's still plenty of variety; everything's just conducted at a quicker pace.

That's not to say you won't have to do your fair share of sneaking around. On the contrary, there are more instances here of behaving like a proper assassin than in the story missions of the PS3 game. Often, you'll be asked to eliminate guards without being detected, and you've got a variety of ways to do it. Best and most efficient is the blowpipe, which can fell a target at twenty paces. Stock up on poison and you can conduct most of your kills from a safe distance.



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Sofia
Price
£34.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-adventure
Age Rating
18+
Website
assassinscreed.ubi.com
Twitter
@assassinscreed
Facebook
facebook.com/assassinscreed

Elsewhere you'll use your wiles to sneak past patrols. Aveline has three personas to switch between: slave, assassin and lady. The former can blend in with other workers to avoid raising the alarm, brushing, scrubbing and sawing as suspicious guards pass by. The lady, meanwhile, loses the ability to climb, but can charm the weak-minded or bribe the greedy. She also has a parasol that doubles as a gun, which is put to alarmingly deadly effect when killing witnesses to reduce her notoriety level. In any guise you can tear posters to reduce suspicion about the slave persona, while the assassin has to put up with constant unease from guards.

Beyond the story missions, there are plenty of asides. You can purchase new dressing chambers to change personas in more convenient locations, and tackle assassination quests. Aveline's a woman of means, and can easily earn enough to purchase a galleon to sail between ports while she works, trading items to swell her coffers.

While its story moves at a faster pace, it's necessarily less ambitious than Connor's arc in *ACIII*. It's quite episodic in feel, many missions revolving around freeing slaves, or offing those who would exploit the less fortunate. Again, it's a fine fit for handheld play, but it means that certain





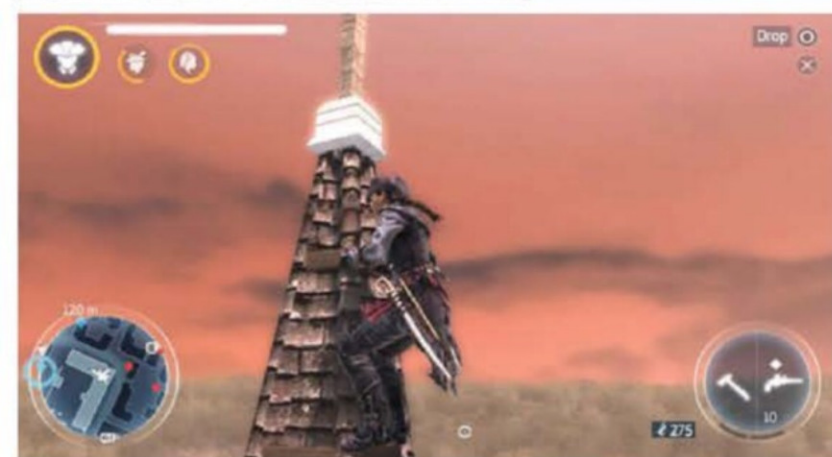
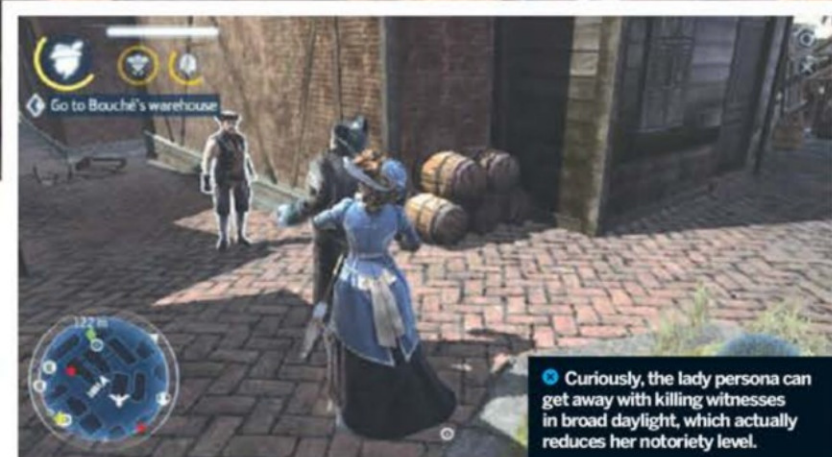
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation



ONLINE MODE RATED

Is this node-capturing aside a world-beater?

LIBERATION'S MULTIPLAYER MODE sees you and other players compete over nodes on a global map. Choosing between Assassins and Templars, you pick a home node based on your geographical location, and then decide where to send your agents – either to compete against rival agents, to collect items to aid in the war effort, or to defend an already captured node. The former triggers a brief stat-based scrap, while the others ask you to wait in real time for them to return. You might find yourself checking in from time to time to stay apprised of the global situation, but it's visually dull and not especially involving. ★★★★★



plotlines feel rather underdeveloped. A tentative romance feels slightly anaemic, and while the script has moments of genuine humour, the script requires many characters to simply act as conduits for exposition.

The touchscreen and rear panel additions, meanwhile, are just intrusive and gimmicky. There's a chain-kill system – seemingly inspired by *Splinter Cell*'s mark-and-execute mechanic – that allows you to tap enemies in turn to take them all out in one swift move. It's a nice idea in theory, and while it's sensibly limited, it seems entirely arbitrary as to when it can and can't be used. Sliding your finger along the front and back of your Vita to open letters feels silly, while finding a bright light to hold the rear camera against in order to decipher a map may trouble

environmentally-conscious players who have installed energy-saving bulbs.

Still, strip out the silliness and you're left with a satisfying action-adventure that plays to Vita's strengths, even if at times it feels like *Assassin's Creed: Diet Coke Edition*.

Chris Schilling

VERDICT

Liberation is snappy and satisfying, though it loses something of the epic sweep of the home console *Assassin's Creeds*. Still, it's refreshing to see a major publisher go the extra mile on Vita, even if the touch controls are a gimmick too far.

76%





RELEASE DATE: 23 NOVEMBER



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
IO Interactive
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action/Stealth
Age Rating
18+
Website
www.hitman.com
Twitter
@IOInteractive
Facebook
www.facebook.com/hitman

Hitman: Absolution

Bloody hell, it's a bit good

PS3 It's not often we're ever going to use a snippet cribbed directly from Wikipedia to open a review, but it just seems so apt here: "IO Interactive has confirmed that *Absolution* will be easier to play and more accessible, but will retain hardcore aspects." It's not often the world's biggest encyclopedia page gets things absolutely right, but it has in this case.

Hitman: Absolution is nothing like what we feared it would be; it's not the ridiculously scripted, base-level straightforward third-person shooter that takes a few too many cues from *Call Of Duty*. There are a couple of linear sections, true, but this is also a game where – in a desert in the middle of nowhere – you have approximately 20 different items to pick up, ways to deal with your target and other bits to find. True, early on in the game you're ushered

down a set path as you escape from a helicopter, and a couple of times it's clear a mission is only there to progress the tale of rescuing a kidnapped girl.

But then you're back in the action: working your way slowly and methodically through an area, spotting your targets, figuring out what you can do to dispatch them, approaching any given situation in a way totally of your own making. You try, you fail. You try again, you mess up stupidly and restart. You blow yourself up with a proximity mine you forgot you'd set. Eventually you take out your targets and escape – you do pretty well, you're impressed with yourself.

You immediately choose to restart the level.

Hitman: Absolution is a game that demands you replay its scenarios just as much as it

You do pretty well, you're impressed with yourself. You immediately choose to restart the level

encourages you to do so. Post-mission screens are a veritable 'Here's what you could have done' list of items, cryptic how-to-kill-them clues and costumes. You see what you missed out on, it triggers a memory of seeing a fire axe or a rickety palette hanging high above, you instantly want to play it again and try that out. IO knows damn well what it's doing when it uses this sort of transparency; when it points out quite clearly just what your opportunities are. And as a result you have dozens of events you will want to play over and over again.

We haven't even mentioned the difficulty settings yet, which in any other game would just be a course for saying... well, saying nothing. Because who talks about difficulty levels? But in *Absolution* they're important – they *matter* to the game, and not just from a trophy perspective. Going lower down the rankings to easier modes means you have more on-screen help, Instinct is more readily available and enemies are dumber. As you work up through the hardness factors you lose prompts, maps, indicators and so on, it becomes harder to earn and hold on to Instinct, enemies become smarter and more numerous. It becomes a lot more challenging, unsurprisingly.

But it's done in such an organic fashion that it feels incredibly *right*. It feels like the kind of experience where – even if you do choose easy or normal from the start – you will teach yourself to move up through the ranks, eventually making yourself a capable and effective killer even on purist mode. We wouldn't say we're quite capable or effective at that rank, mind.

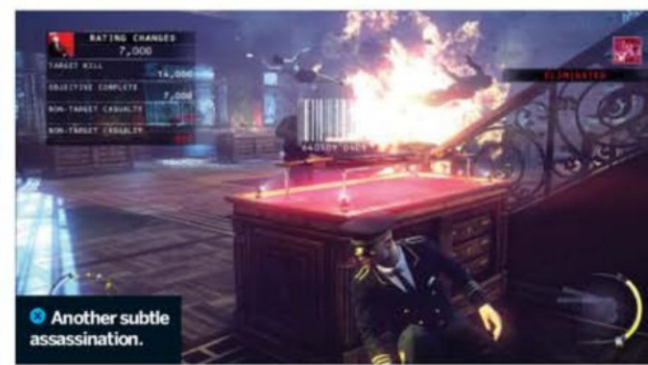
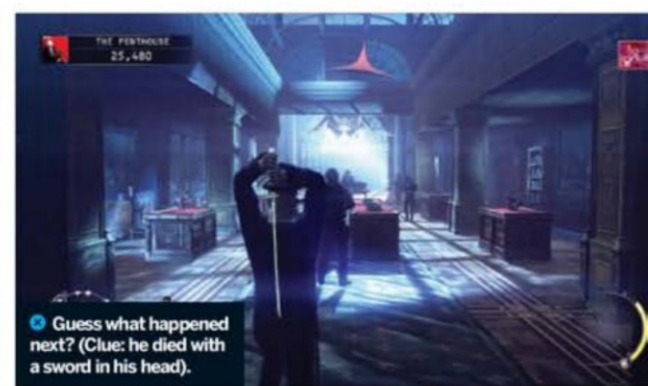




INSTINCTIVE

It doesn't ruin the game! Rejoice!

INSTINCT WAS SOMETHING we were particularly worried about in *Absolution*: the system that allows you to see people through walls, where they're walking and what's in the area that you can pick up – as well as allowing you to blend in and avoid confrontation. It could have been a Win Button and, to be fair, it can be abused a little on the lower difficulties. But generally speaking, Instinct is a solid, useful system that does a good job of replacing the omnipresent map sense Agent 47 seemed to possess in previous *Hitman* games. It's not realistic, but it's more realistic than the old way of things.



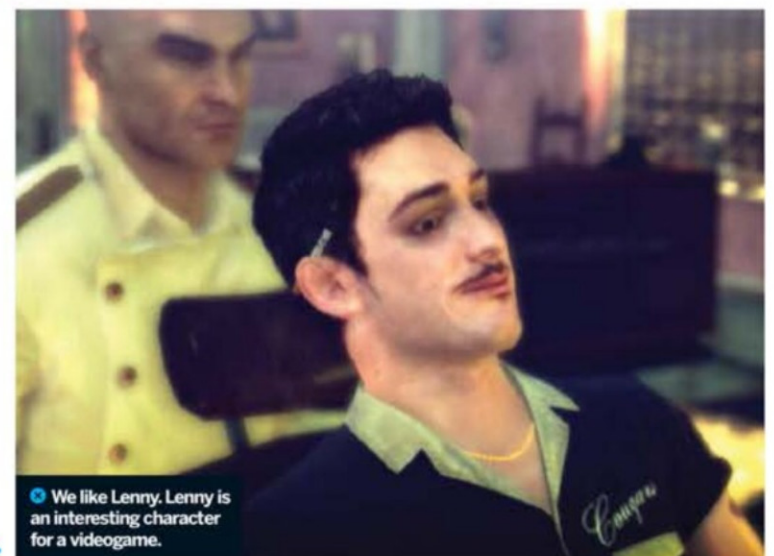
Anyway, back to that hardcore/accessible split. The fear we had about *Absolution* before it came out was based on marketing. Stupid, horrible marketing. Marketing trying to show a product to sell to a certain type of person – a certain type of person who isn't us. Who isn't most fans of the *Hitman* series. The game was made out to be more accessible and, as that's all we'd seen of it, assumptions were made that this would be the *whole* direction for the game.

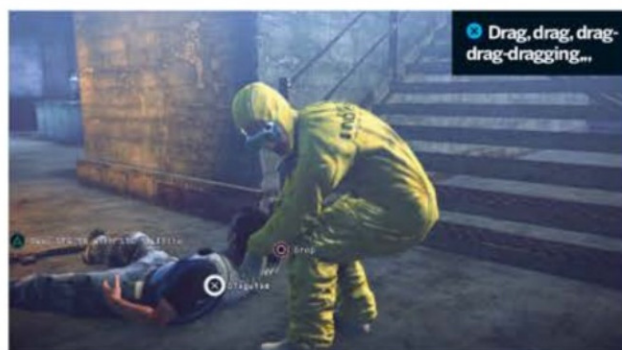
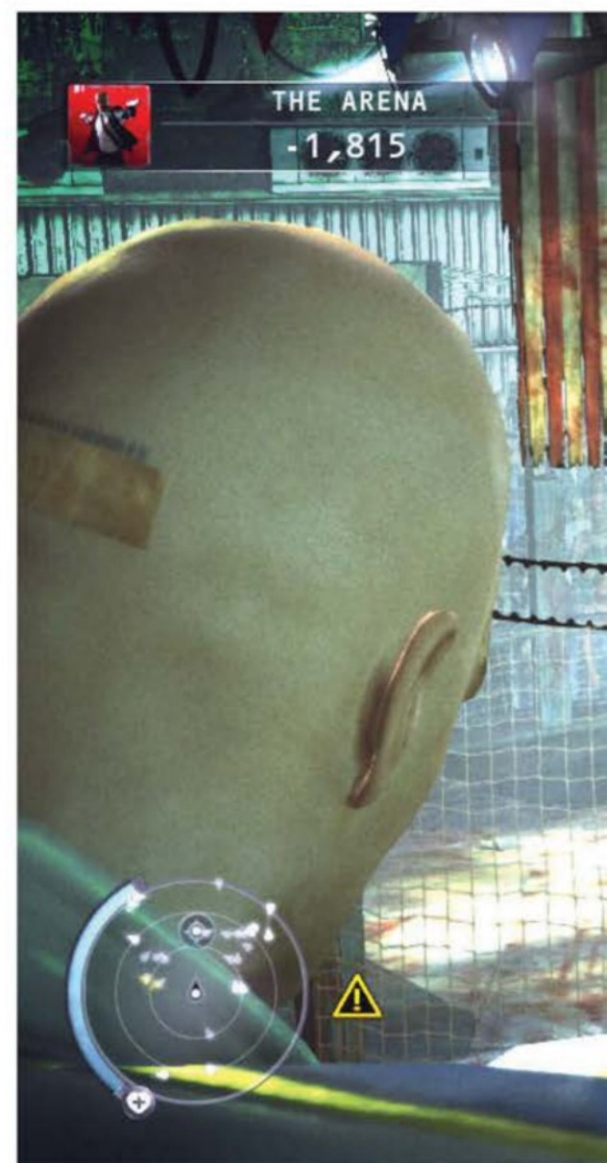
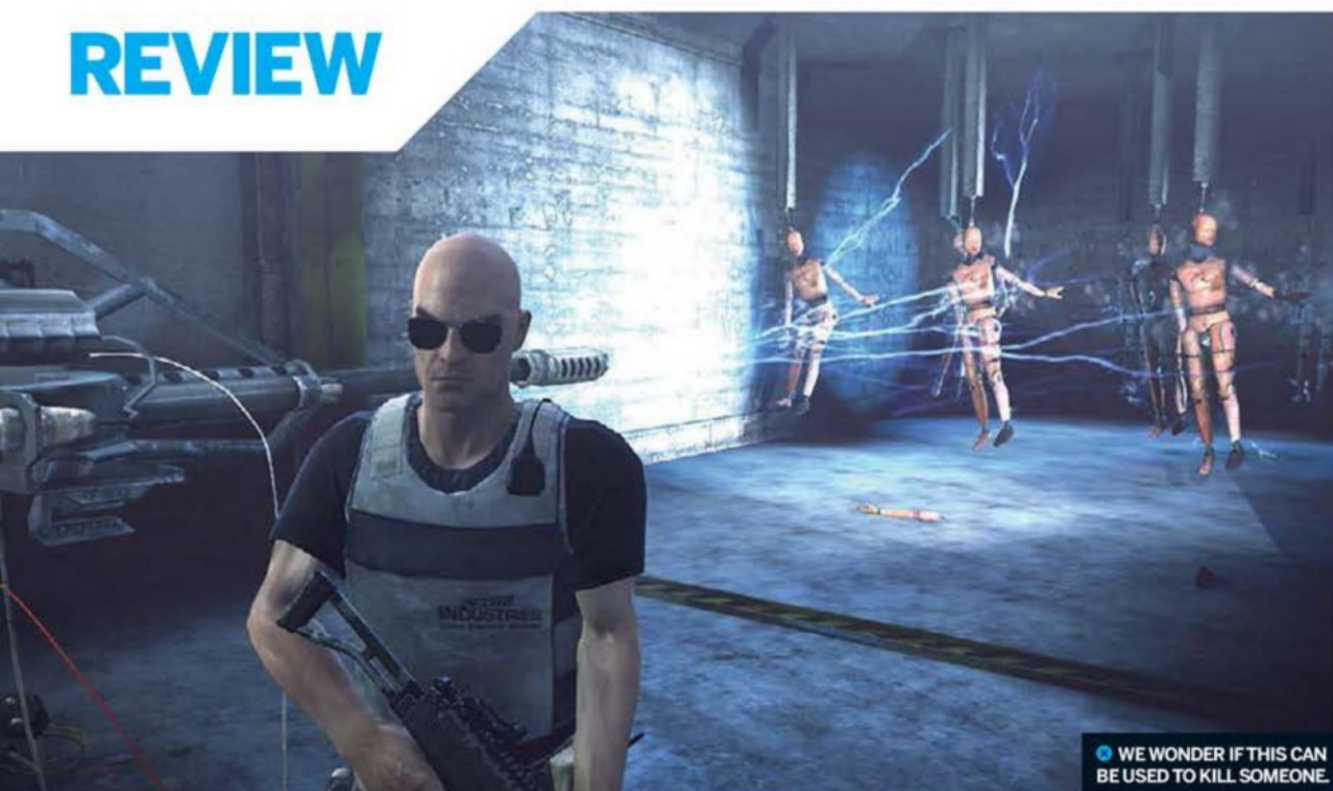
But it's not. It's refined where it needed to be – it's more straightforward, and riddled with far fewer silly little idiosyncrasies that divided opinion. No longer do you have to hold a button to tighten your fibre wire before attacking with it, for example, and it's made much clearer that you're about to be spotted (at least on easier difficulties), removing much of the 'HOW DID

HE SEE ME?' frustration of previous games. That's the sort of way in which *Absolution* is more accessible – in the ways it *should* be more accessible. There's no less freedom than there was before.

You can still make it up as you go along as much as you can plan and execute a flawless plan of action. You will be punished for making mistakes and you will feel the euphoria that comes with *not* making mistakes. *Absolution* treats its players like adults; like people who actually know how to play games and aren't demanding they have their hands held at all hours of the day. But if you want – if you *need* – to hold hands to steady yourself, you're more than welcome, and catered for, to grab on tight.

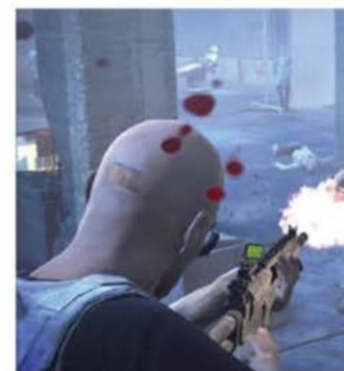
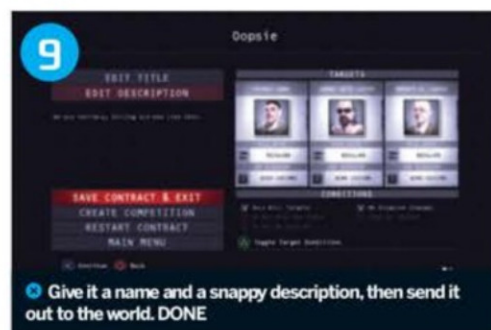
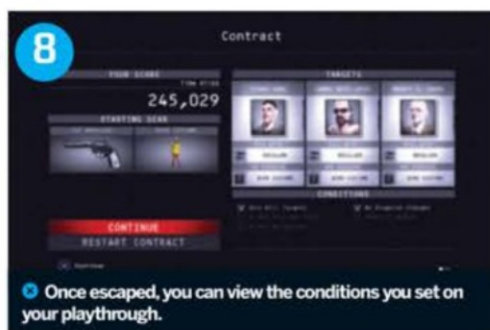
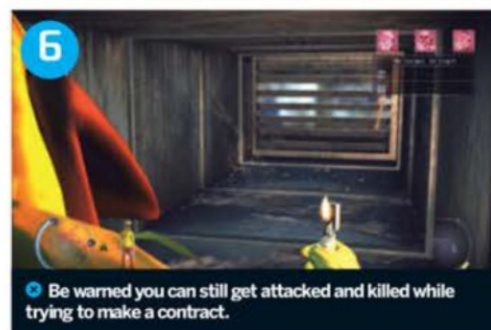
Let it be said that you need this training and grounding in the game's mechanics, as provided

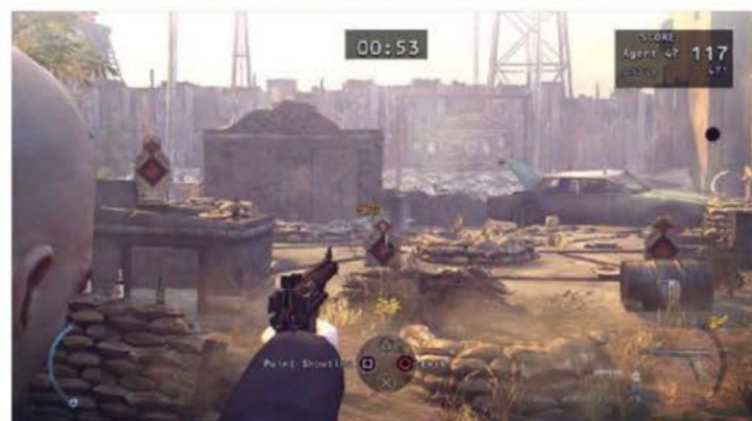
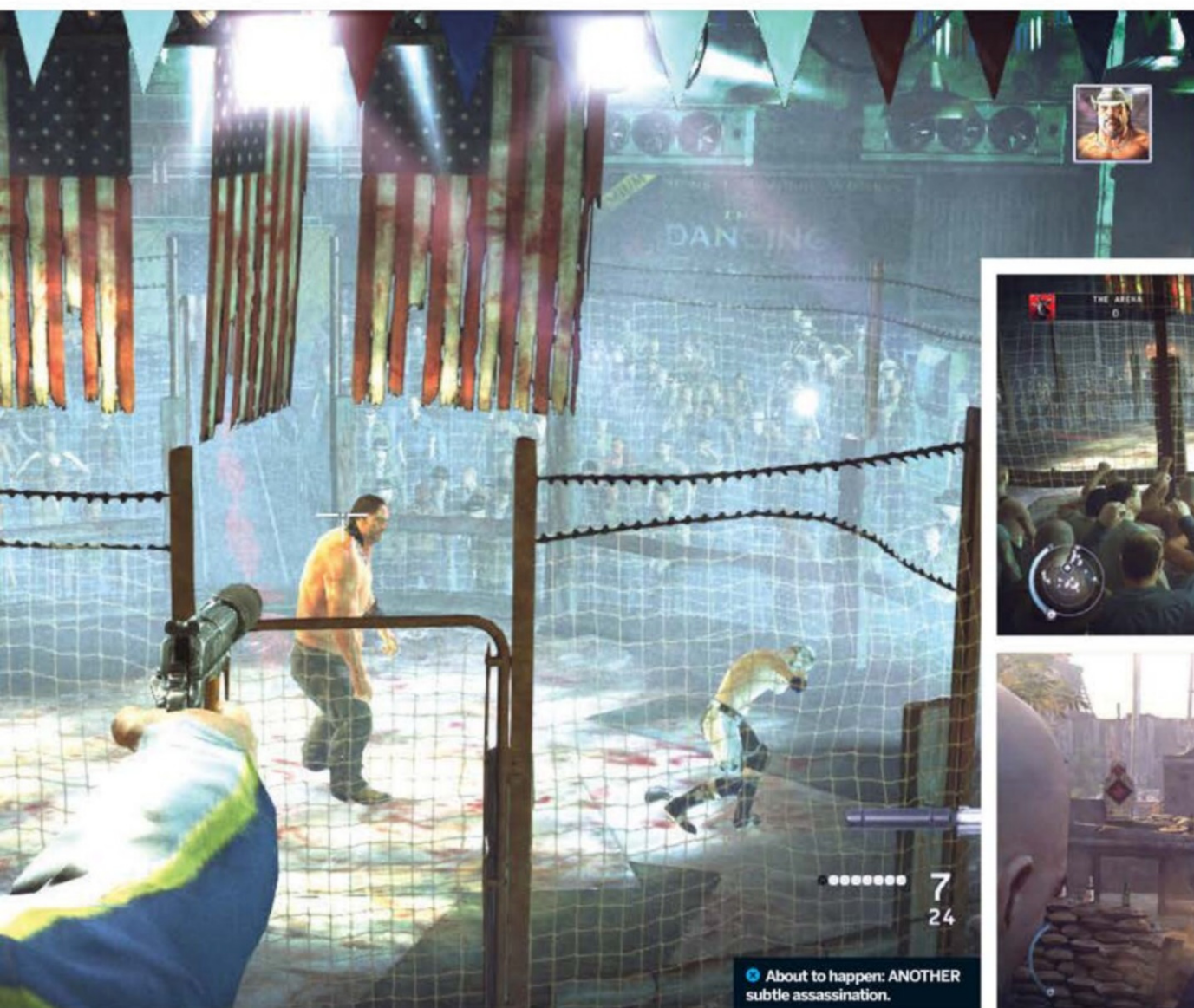




MAKING A CONTRACT

How we made a level to share with the world





> by the main 20-level campaign, to get anything worthwhile out of the online Contracts mode. We were hoping for something special from this: a mode in which you create your own hit and post it for anyone else in the world to take on, with scores ranked against each other.

Unfortunately it's not exactly the brilliant mega-thing we hoped for. It's fun, and a distraction that will keep you playing a bit longer than you would anyway. But there's a distinct feeling that Contracts lacks a fair bit of user input. You're limited to existing campaign levels and have no say in the placement or inclusion of any characters in said levels. It's just your own killing-stuffed filter plastered over an existing framework.

It's not bad, mind you, and if there's scope for additional levels and options to be added through patches or DLC then it can only grow as an experience. The act of actually having to play through a level how you want those taking the challenge on to do so is fun in its own right, forcing you to play *properly* – because you can still be discovered and killed, even when manufacturing a mission for others. It forces players to make things that are achievable, and it means the better players are going to be capable of making some rather difficult experiences for the rest of us. Contracts doesn't feel like a missed opportunity so much as it does a shallow one.

A huge part of what makes *Absolution* such a compelling game is the world it's set in. Not just the well designed and almost *too* detailed levels, but in the way IO sees and presents the bad in the world. We've seen it before from the studio, especially through *Kane And Lynch*, and it surfaces again here. The people you're out to

kill generally deserve it: they're ugly, both physically and mentally; they're perverts and psychopaths; they embrace corruption as tightly as they embrace the cash that motivates their actions. In short, they're a bunch of bastards – and it's fantastic to see.

It's not like we're dealing with the depth of characterisation that will change the very course of storytelling as we know it, nothing as *huge* as that. It's more in the details – in Blake Dexter licking his teeth as he talks, in Lenny's physical and mental afflictions, in Birdie's jacket stained with the fecal matter of a thousand pigeons (or his security guard's ripped crotch on his jeans). There's small, almost insignificant detail to the people; imperfections that turn them into far more believable, rounded characters than they would otherwise be. Plus, as mentioned, they're a bunch of bastards who deserve to die, generally speaking. It's just a shame that most of the female characters in the game are relegated to size eight, skirt/latex-wearing, cleavage-baring, sexy femme fatales or damsels in (partial) distress. But let's not get back on to *that* trailer.

This bunch of reprobates (and whatever the opposite of 'reprobates' is) makes up the inevitable story that is far more focused than in any previous *Hitman* title. The voice talent is surprisingly good, the cut-scenes are suitably moody and dark and it isn't a tale that feels in any real way bad, per se. But it serves as little more than a shuttle service to get the player between playgrounds (of death and sneaking). Credit where it's due: we wanted to kill the people we were told to, and 47 ends up a slightly more rounded character by the end. But ultimately the

It's one of the best games to come out on PS3 at any point

narrative is ignorable, serving as little more than a reason to fill space with this paragraph.

Also, for all the demands for David Bateson to reprise his role as 47... well, he's not actually *that* good, is he? Monotonous and emotionless, but in entirely the wrong fashion – he doesn't bring mystery to the character, just an aloofness that damages scenes.

IO even manages to skilfully navigate the whole minefield of leaving things open for a sequel. No major spoilers, of course, but on finishing *Absolution* you are presented with a satisfying finish to proceedings *and* the possibility for things to continue in another game. Combined with everything else IO gets right, it's just another reason this is one of the best games to come out on PS3 this year. It's one of the best games to come out on PS3 at *any* point. We don't know what they're putting in the water at Square Enix's publishing headquarters, but it seems to be doing a damn good job.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It's still a bit rough around some edges, but there's no denying the scope, intelligence and passion poured into *Hitman: Absolution*. IO has made quite possibly the best game in the series and easily one of the best games on PS3.

93%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Medal of Honor: Warfighter

And now for something completely different. Only joking



DETAILS

Publisher
EA

Developer
Danger Close

Price
£49.99

Players
1-20

Genre
FPS

Age Rating
18

Website
www.ea.com/medalofhonor

Twitter
@medalofhonor

Facebook
www.facebook.com/medalofhonor



About half way through *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter's* campaign, your sidekick 'Mother' announces 'it's only going to get worse, Preacher'. Well, he's not wrong, old Mother. He's not wrong at all.

Medal Of Honor: Warfighter is easy to laugh at. It has a stupid subtitle, although one that's actually used in the military. It is so extraordinarily unoriginal that it's almost not even worth mentioning its similarities to *Call Of Duty*. And it's got a plot spelled out in weird almost-real CG cut-scenes that makes less sense than *Prometheus*.

As a single-player campaign, *Warfighter* is seriously flawed. Danger Close has built a shooter around weak enemy AI, long-laboured levels and a disproportionate number of breachable doors that come complete with a slow-motion headshot mini-game that's simultaneously completely tasteless and gruesomely moreish. Weirdly, you actually get more breaching options (all cosmetic) by collecting headshots throughout the campaign, as if your fireteam partner is deliberately withholding his shotgun or explosives until you prove how much you love murder.

The campaign is split between two soldiers, Preacher and the amazingly named Stump,

who must independently plod through elaborately decorated corridors, blasting anyone who looks vaguely un-American in the face. Now, this isn't an entirely dissimilar concept to 2010's *Medal Of Honor*, but that game managed to exceed expectations by basing almost all of its levels around a concept. There was the 'We're gonna die' level, the 'Getting chased down a hill' level and

The biggest problem with Medal Of Honor: Warfighter's campaign is that it's just boring

the 'We'll cover you from here' level. It wasn't exactly Valve, but it worked.

Here, though, much of those concepts have been abandoned for sheer force. Yes, there are a few neat ideas thrown in (an on-foot chase has potential before it turns into another protracted fire-fight, for example), but most of the time is spent crouching behind cover as robotically-accurate enemies pepper you with gunfire, and you pop your head up, shake off a couple to the face, and fire back. The enemy AI is particularly poor, actually. They just run into space and slowly turn to face you like a contestant on the first series of *Robot Wars*, before settling into

a piece of cover. We don't expect complex learning AI, but this feels positively archaic.

The biggest problem with *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter's* campaign, though, is that it's just boring. With no real systems at play to get the cerebellum fired-up, a game like this needs almost relentless spectacle to keep you engaged. And while *Warfighter* does throw up a couple of decent moments – a car chase through a Middle Eastern market being a particular highlight – it just doesn't do enough to even outperform its predecessor.

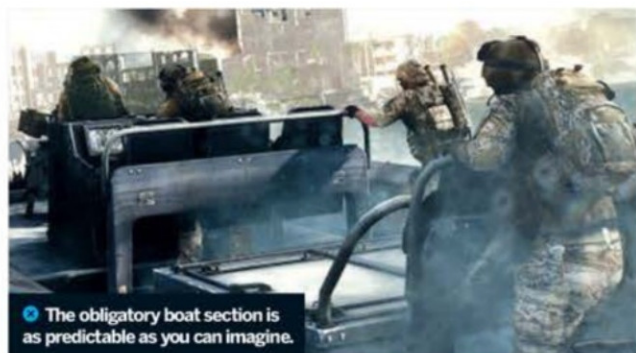
If it weren't for the ludicrous accuracy of your opponents, you could feasibly blast through the entire game (which is pretty short, although that's somewhat of a blessing) while half asleep. Just plough on towards the objective marker, letting the heavily assisted aim take care of the enemies. All you have to do is turn a few corners and hit fire. Harder difficulties don't bring a more thoughtful challenge either, just fewer hitpoints for you, and even more accuracy from them.

It's telling that the entire game is built on DICE's formidable Frostbite 2 engine, as the campaign is almost as defunct as *Battlefield 3's*. Thankfully, much like *Battlefield* itself, the multiplayer is by far the best part of the *Warfighter* package. To the point where we'd recommend ditching the campaign altogether (which is almost certainly what most players do anyway, judging by the viewing figures of the popular YouTube channels).

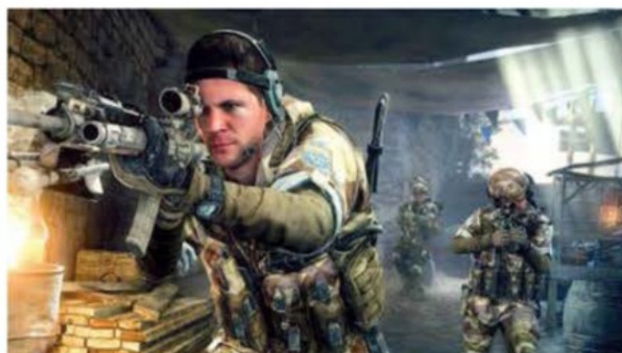
Multiplayer is a far better proposition. At first, it appears entirely by the numbers, with a ranked progression system, unlockable weapons and kits, standard team deathmatches and anything else you've already played a thousand times before.

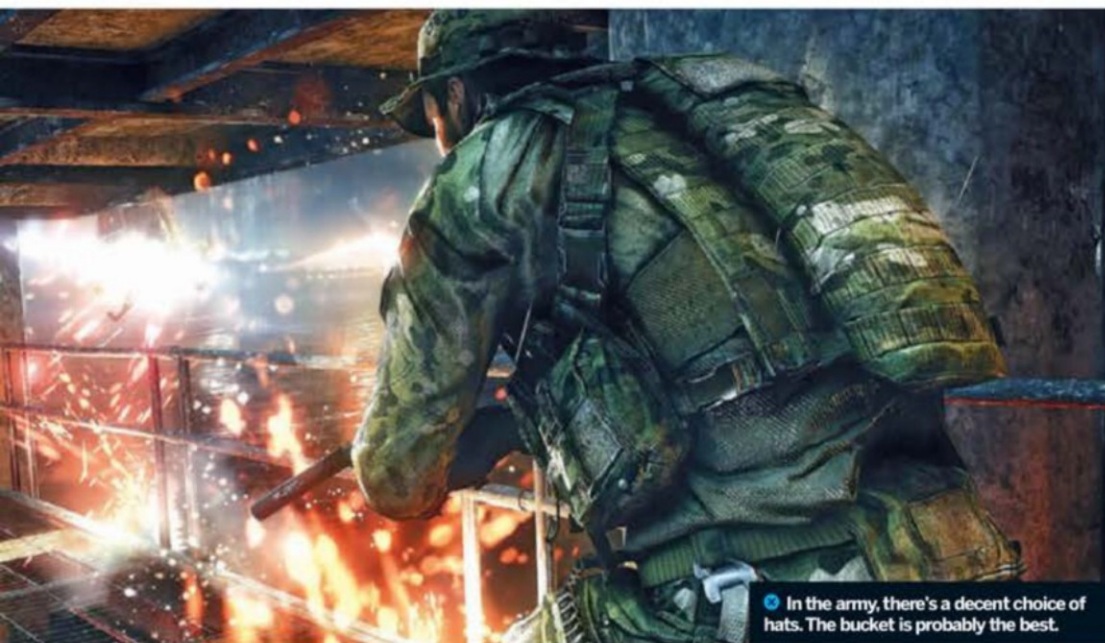


Choppers and villages are Frostbite 2's absolute favourites.



The obligatory boat section is as predictable as you can imagine.





In the army, there's a decent choice of hats. The bucket is probably the best.

Delve just a little deeper, though, and you'll uncover a thoroughly decent set of systems and ideas, firmly entrenched within familiar guidelines, but all solidly implemented.

Central to all of this is the Fire Team system. Both *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter's* campaign and multiplayer focus on the relationship between teammates while on the field of battle. In multiplayer though, it's integral. Upon joining any match type (we'll use Team Deathmatch as an easy example) you're instantly paired up with a buddy. He'll be outlined in green, can be seen through walls, and has the ability to heal you, resupply you, and even contribute to your score.

This fire team dynamic actively alters the way matches play out. In *COD*, even team games are often dominated by highly-skilled lone wolves – the kill streaks and perks are designed to bolster high-level players' ability to do damage on their own. It's why matches

like Domination, those that do require team-work, are often won by teams who know each other. There's very little systemic in place to encourage team work.

Warfighter is different, and it changes battle. Not only do you receive ranking points for resupplying your team-mate, you can also save them when they're in danger, or avenge their death. Brilliantly, you'll also receive points any time they get a kill. Sticking together is vital, as both parties are directly rewarded for doing so. And it translates on the battlefield – you'll rarely see an opponent on his own, so you have to make sure you're aware of an enemy's partner's position before you start firing. Yes, you may hoover up a few more double kills than you would in *COD*, but you'll also get killed by enemy team-mates if you go charging around like an idiot.

It's actually nice to be talking about systems after the debacle that is the

A LA MODE

A breakdown of what's on offer in *Warfighter's* multiplayer

FIRETEAM

If you've played *Battlefield*, you'll understand the concept of buddy spawning and teams-within-teams. *Warfighter* takes this to its natural conclusion, offering each player a partner during conflict. Each pair can heal and resupply each other, spawn on one another, and even see each other through walls, *Left 4 Dead* style. It lends the combat a reasonably unique flow, as you'll rarely find a single, lone-wolfing opponent. Perfect if you have one good friend who you regularly play multiplayer with.

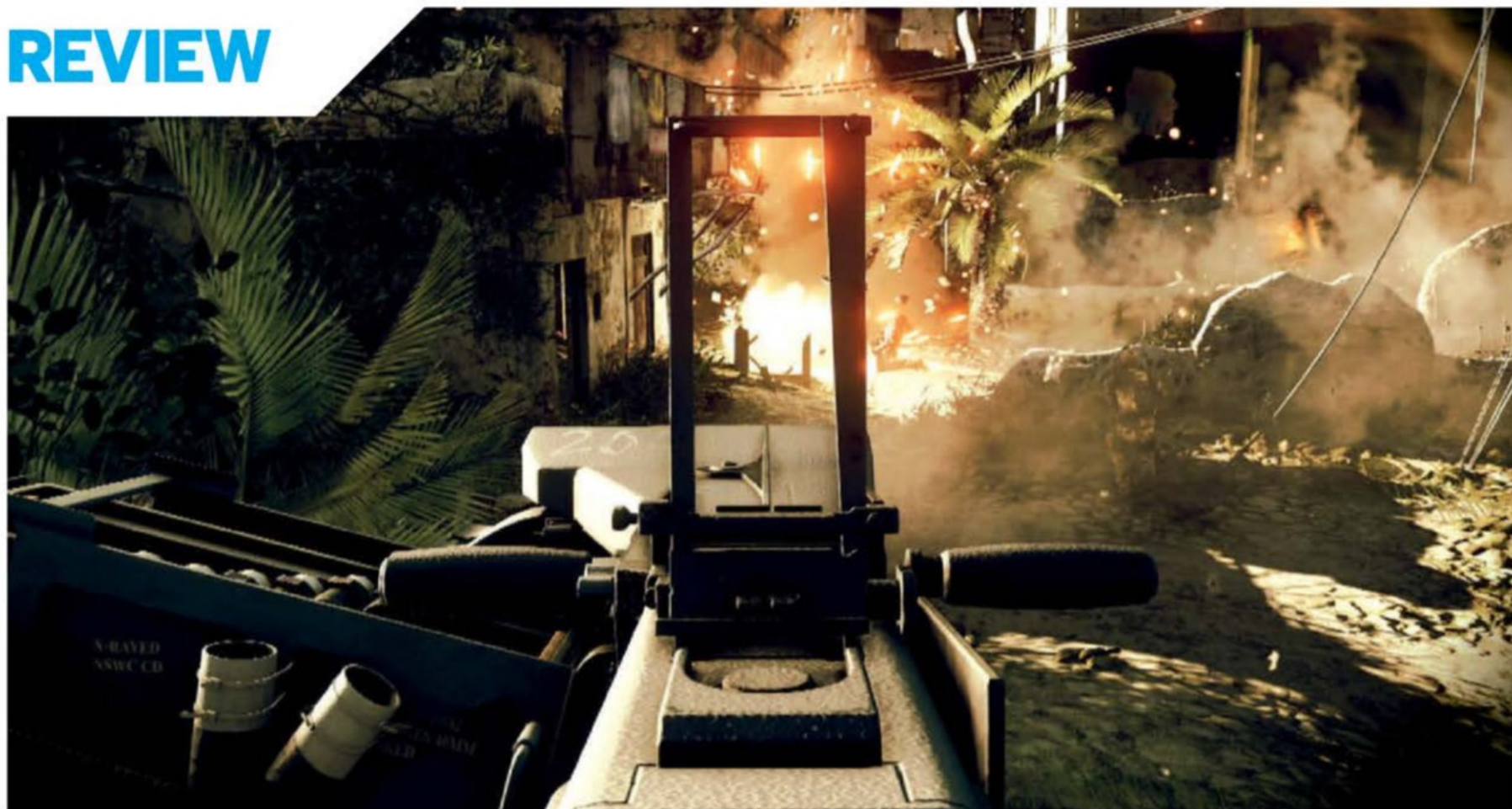
HOME RUN

Warfighter's signature mode is Home Run, a six-on-six eliminator that offers no respawns, opposing flags, and ever-mutating tactics. It's essential to be in good communication with your fireteam buddy, and ensure that you don't rush out into the open and get your head blown off before you get a chance to formulate a strategy.

COMBAT MISSION

A hangover from 2010's *Medal Of Honor*, Combat Mission is essentially *Battlefield's* Rush mode shrunk. Three objectives are fought over, and the attacking team has a finite number of spawn tokens that the defenders must deplete before the attackers blow up each objective. It doesn't have the emergent drama of the DICE FPS, but still offers quite a nice long-form slice of multiplayer.

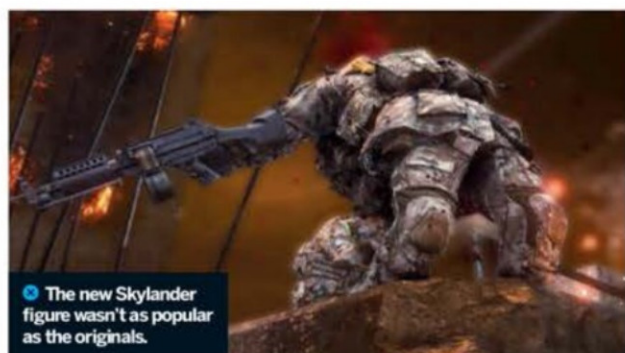
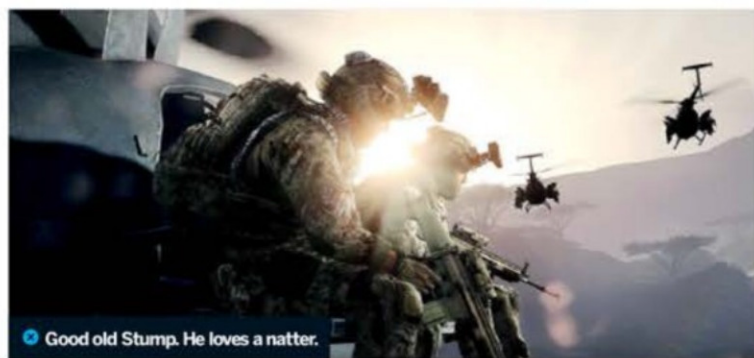




INTERNATIONAL WARFARE

Making stereotypes fun

BEFORE PLOUGHING INTO battle in *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter's* online servers, you are given the opportunity to pick a nation to represent. Unlike most games' cosmetic nationalism, though, here you actually get to play as your own countryman. The British guy says things like 'It's going to kick off' and 'Get home before 'Enders' (presumably they couldn't use the full word *Eastenders*, or perhaps he just really likes *Zone Of The Enders*). In a game that promotes itself on authenticity, having a range of nationalities is actually sensible, but it's done in such an amusing way that you can't help but laugh. Perhaps if *Warfighter* had allowed some more of this light-hearted personality to come to the fore, it would have more of an identity of its own.



Medal Of Honor: Warfighter's multiplayer might not be as fluid and relentlessly addictive as *COD*, but it unquestionably has charm and character

single-player. After all, this is what makes games great, not mindless spectacle and thoughtless bluster. *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter's* multiplayer might not be as fluid and relentlessly addictive as *COD*, but it unquestionably has charm and character. The Home Run game type (see previous page) is likely to prove the most popular, and the multiplayer home page dynamically changes depending on your playing habits. It's clear where the real work has gone.

Perhaps the only real disappointment in *Warfighter's* multiplayer is how it all looks. Frostbite 2 is probably a bit too resource-heavy for the PS3, and with the detail dialed down to ensure a steady frame-rate, it can actually look quite ugly at times. Lo-res textures, plenty of dreaded jaggies and just a layer of roughness that you wouldn't ever see in *Call Of Duty*. Most of the time, this is just an issue of preference, but when it occasionally occludes enemy placements, it's thoroughly annoying.

In truth, *Warfighter* isn't likely to hold the shooting game community's interest

after *Black Ops 2* arrives, but it's not fair to judge it on the presumed actions of its audience. Danger Close has established itself as a perfectly decent multiplayer designer. Of course, only extended play will reveal the inevitable balance wrinkles and map foibles, but early impressions are favourable. Compare this to many of the half-baked multiplayer modes in recent supposed triple-A games, and it's just in a different class altogether.

And that's what saves *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter* from utter mediocrity. Danger Close may have somehow undermined its own prior good work on the campaign, but it has delivered in producing a tight multiplayer suite. In fact, *Warfighter's* multi is actually better than the DICE-developed equivalent in the 2010 *Medal Of Honor* reboot.

So, *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter* might be easy to laugh at, easy to dismiss and easy to ignore, but it has targeted its audience and given them almost exactly what they're after. It's limited, sure, and will almost certainly be eclipsed by *Black Ops II*, but when has that ever stopped the eager masses?

Jon Denton

VERDICT

The campaign is crap. Clearly. These games aren't about campaigns any more, though. They're about the potential of multiplayer. Here, *Medal Of Honor: Warfighter* delivers. It's not spectacular, it's not revolutionary, but it does just enough different to be worth a look. Just.

72%



XBOX 360

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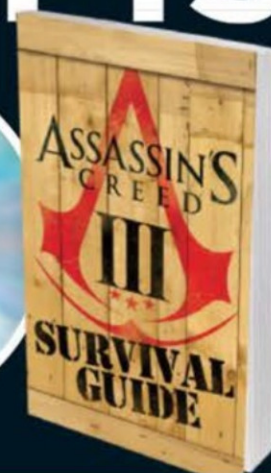
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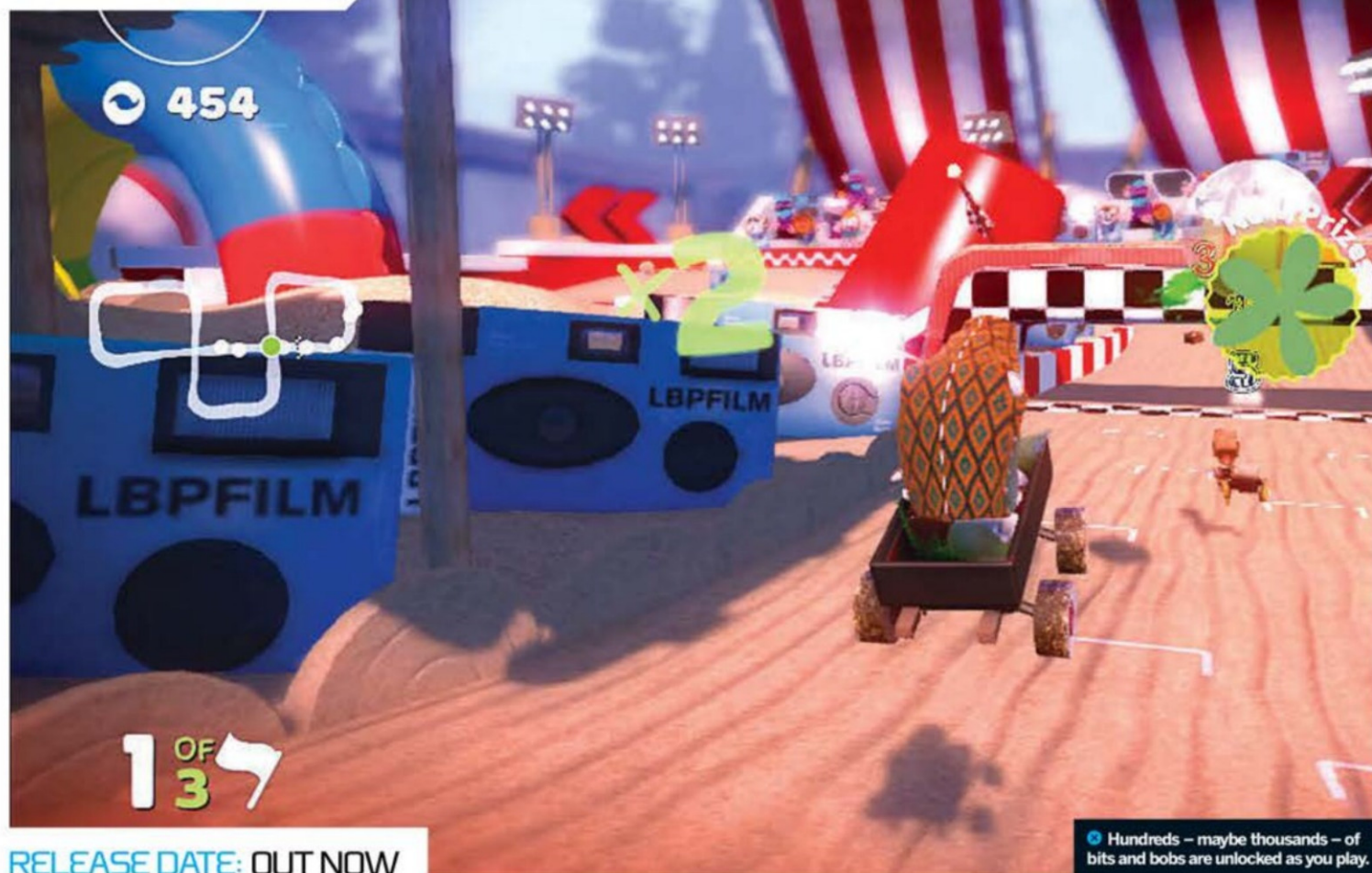


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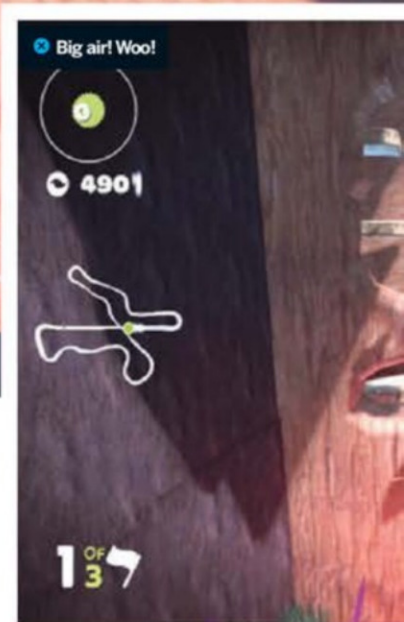
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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Hundreds – maybe thousands – of bits and bobs are unlocked as you play.



LittleBigPlanet Karting

Another great game, guaranteed to sell about 20 copies

PS3 LittleBigPlanet Karting, you say? Psh, stupid tie-in nonsense that devalues the joy we got so much of from the original LBP games, we say. Then we find out United Front Games – a studio we very much like – is handling development. Then we actually play it, as you do, and realise that, damn, it's quite rather really bloody ruddy good.

Curse you, cynicism.

This is kart racing as you would want it to be: fast and zippy, smooth to play, weapons lobbed all over the place and drift-boosting as much as humanly possible (and a bit more). LittleBigPlanet Karting proves once again that this is a genre United Front Games just gets, and it single-handedly banishes any bad memories we might have of the poor handheld spin-offs of ModNation Racers (more on that later).

Taking place in the Imaginarium, or something else nonsensical we didn't really pay attention to, LBPK (and Stephen Fry) takes you through a number of different worlds and settings for its tracks and is – as you would expect – fantastic in its presentation. And the music, oh!, the music. It's lovely, really it is.

It helps that the game plays well too, with a real zippiness to the experience that we might not

have expected before getting our hands on the finished game – it certainly wasn't this smooth in the beta.

Of course as a kart racer, LBPK lives or dies by its multiplayer modes. Clue: it lives. There's a wealth of co-operative and competitive action on offer, with all of the game open to be played by multiple persons and online leaderboards allowing you to share and battle each others times and scores. Plus – and it's a big plus because we're hoary old folks who like this sort of stuff – there's a solid splitscreen mode too. Lovely stuff.

But there's the distinctive "LittleBigPlanet" part of the game's title to tackle, and it's the sort of thing we struggle to do justice to in a review. Creation was a feature of United Front's last kart racer, but it's so much more this time around.

In a choice between ModNation and LittleBigPlanet Karting, the latter is going to be the one we recommend every single time

LBPK's creation suite allows you to modify your racers, karts, pod, stickers, tracks, arenas and even the type of game you're playing.

It's not to the level of LittleBigPlanet 2, being limited as it is to different forms of racing game rather than any game, but we can see some incredible feats of creativity on the horizon once



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
United Front Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
7+
Website
www.unitedfrontgames.com/games/littlebigplanet-karting
Twitter
[@unitedfrontgame](https://twitter.com/unitedfrontgame)
Facebook
www.facebook.com/unitedfrontgames



it's had some time out in the wild. Can somebody make us a new version of the Amiga classic SuperCars 2, please? Thanks.

Those without the ability to make something truly special can still create though, as is the simplicity of use with all LBP's creative tools. Sure, you'll miss out on the more advanced techniques of switches, AI, cogs, spanners, other things we make up and so on that can create totally unique experiences, but you can both create tracks easily enough and there's a fairly in-depth tutorial on offer to teach you how to do the more complex things. Like SuperCars 2.

It's a fair and obvious comparison to make, but why the heck not, eh kids: this is from the same studio that brought us ModNation Racers and, as such, is destined to be looked at alongside it. Thing is, ModNation was really good. That's something that seems to have been lost over the last few years, through the terrible spin-off, port



th

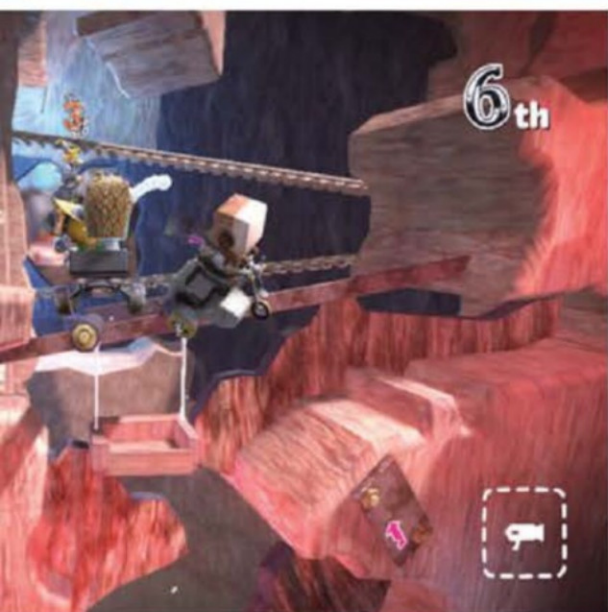


LittleBigPlanet Karting

GUNS FOR SHOW

We've used that as a boxout title too many times...

WEAPONRY IS A big part of karting games, so sayeth the *Bible Of Mario Kart*. The bang-sticks and so on in *LittleBigPlanet Karting* aren't exactly the most interesting things in the world, doing a job rather than providing anything particularly unique or iconic. But there is an element United Front has picked up on that we feel the need to point out and praise: the ability to defend. You are prompted when an attack is incoming and – if you hold a weapon and time a counter-strike correctly – can destroy the projectile. It's simple, but it makes a big difference. We like.



versions. So *LBP Karting* has both a challenge to live up to in the shape of United Front Games' kart-racing pedigree and a near-guarantee that it's going to be good, seeing as the studio has done it before.

In short: *LittleBigPlanet Karting* is better than *ModNation Racers*. In longer: it offers more, it's better presented, the characters are more endearing and less terrifying/weird, there's far more in the way of creation tools and, well – Stephen Fry. But at the same time, it's a very similar beast to what came before from a purely mechanical perspective. The races – the main meat of the game – are the most disappointing part when you put them up against those of *LBP*'s progenitor.

It's still brilliant though, and in a choice between *ModNation* and *LittleBigPlanet Karting* the latter is going to be the one we recommend every single time. It's just worth pointing out that it's not

hugely different from what came before. Which is true, but just not relevant in this case.

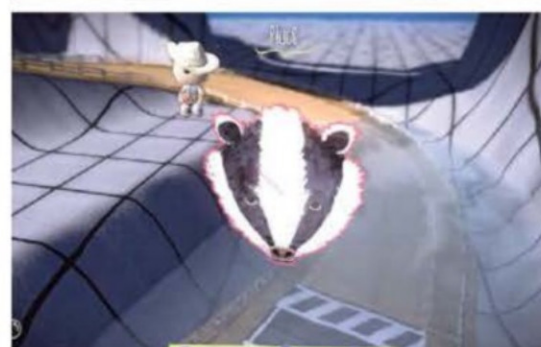
But that's grasping at negative straws (they're a thing): *LittleBigPlanet Karting* is an excellent game and, thanks to the robust creation suite (that confuses our tiny minds), can and will last you a lot longer than the main game alone would. And seeing as it's a lot of fun, that would last you a while. It'll last you a while. That's what we're saying.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

LittleBigPlanet Karting is just pure, solid fun – with the added bonus of deep, technical creation tools to keep you coming back for more, whether making it yourself or downloading from others. United Front has fast become one of our favourite developers.

85%



REVIEW

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Need For Speed: Most Wanted

Is Criterion on TRACK, or has it BURNED-OUT? Boom boom

PS3 It might sound weird, but booting up *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* manages to evoke a surprising amount of excitement: the glare of the sun, the crescendo of sound effects, the clean, empty UI and, best of all, the roar of a supercar bursting into action. It's a celebration, a welcome home party for one as you get ready to tear up Fairhaven in what could well be the best racer of this generation. And that isn't a claim we make lightly.

But considering that Criterion's *Burnout Paradise* still remains one of the best arcade racers out there, it's hardly surprising that the same team – now in control of EA's behemoth *Need For Speed* franchise – has managed to craft such a superlative racer. It is the culmination of everything the team has worked towards this generation, fine-tuning every element it knows so well to make something very special indeed.

Take the open world, for example. Criterion has learnt from its mistakes with *Burnout*

Paradise – most notably the initial lack of a retry function – and built upon it. Fairhaven isn't a grid-based template like *Paradise City*; it has roads that *feel* like roads and make for far more interesting races. The result is something more akin to *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit*: a selection of winding streets, fast-paced highways and carefully situated crossroads. Fairhaven is much more detailed however, and though many of the areas share similarities with *Burnout Paradise* – the abandoned airfield, the industrial district, the docks – the level of fidelity means you can instantly tell when one area blends into the next. The distinct flavours of *Need For Speed: Most Wanted*'s open world helps craft your racing, too, mind-mapping the best cornering techniques for each section or intuitively identifying the right jump or shortcut to shave off a few seconds.

The driving mechanics themselves are considerably improved, too. Gone are the 'slippy' controls of *Burnout Paradise* in favour



DETAILS

Publisher
Electronic Arts
Developer
Criterion
Price
£49.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
12
Website
www.needforspeed.com/most-wanted
Twitter
[@NeedForSpeed](https://twitter.com/NeedForSpeed)
Facebook
facebook.com/NeedForSpeed

of something more like *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit*. There's a resistance to the vehicle at first but you soon learn when to use this to your advantage, helping to recognise when to simply drift around a long corner or when the handbrake needs to be applied. Each car you use comes with its own style, too. A heavier muscle car – like the Corvette – will need to be coaxed around bends, while quicker and nimbler vehicles like the TVR Tesla can dominate corners but are likely to get crushed just by looking at a passing car.

This doesn't mean there's a 'best' car, however. *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* enables you to pick any car you want from the very start of the game, providing you can find it. Jack Spots litter the city of Fairhaven and once found that car is forever yours. Initially each vehicle lacks anything in the way of options, but beat the first race and you'll unlock nitrous boost. Additional unlocks can be acquired by completing and winning later races, with each car having five possible events to take part in. It might seem limiting at first, but this is actually a clever decision on Criterion's part: though you may encounter the same race with a different vehicle, you'll never be completely overwhelmed and nor will you find yourself unnecessarily over-equipped for any particular event.

There's more to it, as well. As you explore the city between race events and find new cars, the temptation to switch out for something new is impossible to resist. Even more difficult is the allure of other collectables in the form of billboards, security gates and speed cameras. The former two most will remember from *Burnout Paradise*, and are as moreish as ever; each new billboard or gate you destroy leads to a search for more, adamant that where there's one there must be others. You'll likely spend





Need For Speed: Most Wanted



It's so simple to change anything with EasyDrive. It really keeps the game moving.

as much of your time exploring the city as you will racing.

It's just as well that exploration isn't hampered in any way, then; everything from car swapping, race events or even vehicle customisation is accessible from a single button press. The EasyDrive menu is the evolution of AutoLog, tracking friends' achievements as well as ensuring every option you might need is quickly and easily accessible without ever leaving the game.

Which leaves only the cops as the only criticism to be found in *Need For Speed: Most Wanted*. During events their inclusion matters as they work to put both you and your fellow street racers out of commission. Roadblocks, PIT manoeuvres and spike strips are dangers you'll often need to overcome in certain events – and that's fine, fun even – but it's in the open world exploration where this becomes something of a nuisance. Sometimes you just want to get on with it, and the police hounding your every move while you try to escape can become bothersome.

Honestly, though, that's a minor concern in the grand scheme of things. *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* is Criterion's magnum opus, blending the absorbing sense of speed from *Burnout Paradise* with some utterly fantastic visuals, super slick racing mechanics and a better-than-ever AutoLog system.

Adam Barnes

VERDICT

Burnout Paradise 2.0 is a lazy reference, but we're going to use it anyway. In fact, we probably should've started this review with that and avoided these 800 words. Still, *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* is easily the best arcade racer of this generation.

95%



Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit

Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit Issue 199
Criterion's first attempt at Need For Speed introduced AutoLog. This is like that, but so much better. 91%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

007 Legends

Bond's best bits? Not quite



DETAILS

Publisher

Activision

Developer

Eurocom

Price

£39.99

Players

1-4

Genre

FPS

Age Rating

16+

Website

007Legends.com

Twitter

@007Legends

Facebook

www.facebook.com/LegendsGame



007 Legends – Derby-based developer Eurocom's follow up to the warmly received *GoldenEye: Reloaded* – trades in nostalgia; and it does so in spades. For the most part the efforts to effectively reboot the major story beats of *Goldfinger*, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, *Licence to Kill*, *Die Another Day* and *Moonraker* through the eyes of current 007, Daniel Craig, are admirably effective.

The narrative hook for the studio's licence to pull off such a feat is tied into *Skyfall*'s opening reel, wherein Bond has been accidentally shot by Naomi Harris' Agent Eve, while brawling with a foe on top of a speeding train. Once hit, he plummets off a bridge into the murky waters below and five extremely vivid flashbacks are quickly kicked into touch in a bid to keep the flimsy story moving forward.

It's only truly jarring when you have to watch Craig scan an office for evidence using a Sony Xperia smartphone, or get behind the wheel of a modern day Aston Martin in some of *Legend*'s choppy missions. It's just unfortunate then that the game borrows so heavily from that other Activision monster brand – *Call Of Duty*. In fact, it mimics so much of Infinity Ward's behemoth that a lot of the time it feels like you're slogging through a poor man's *COD*, clothed in a cheap tuxedo and haphazardly masquerading as a *Bond* game. While stealth does have its part to play in the

Of all the *Bond* titles in *Legends* this one is the weakest.



A lot of the time it feels like you're slogging through a poor man's *COD*, clothed in a cheap tuxedo

campaign, these sections are marred by the heavily flawed game design. Each time, you're tasked with a little sleuthing, but the end result is almost always the same – a scramble for the nearest checkpoint in a desperate attempt to dodge a bullet. And then there are the dust-ups with the villains in each of the five retellings – these are depressingly repetitive, barely requiring any kind of skill bar the ability to flick up or down on the right stick.

007 Legends isn't completely devoid of brilliance – a genuine highlight comes in the form of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*'s

skiing section – but it's simply not enough to detract from the infuriating level design, colourless vocal performances and a studio's worrying reliance on the *Call of Duty* playbook. It's real shame then that Eurocom have taken what could have been a genuinely exciting romp through 50 years of Bond heritage, and instead delivered a flaccid arrangement of familiar gaming tropes. Goodbye, Mr Bond.
Sebastian Williamson

VERDICT

007 Legends should have been a fist-pumping trip through some of Bond's on-screen highlights, but instead what we got was a mediocre shooter tainted by the duller of shootouts, laughable voice acting and the laziest of boss battles.

44%

Oddjob: another classic Bond villain marred by sloppy game design.



And another futile gadget for the broken stealth sections.





Admittedly, some of the character designs verge on excellent.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Doom 3 BFG Edition



DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda Softworks
Developer
id Software
Price
£29.99
Players
1-4
Genre
First-person shooter
Age Rating
18+
Website
www.bethsoft.com/en-gb/games/doom_3_bfg
Twitter
@Doom
Facebook
facebook.com/DOOM

WADs – yay! BFG 9000s – yay! Super shottys – yay! Doom 3 – boo



Doom 3 has never been that good. Sorry. We're not the types to jump into the past and scream in the faces of reviewers of yesterday "YOU WERE WRONG," but, well, they were.

Because playing through *Doom 3*, its expansion pack *Resurrection Of Evil* and the new eight-level Lost Mission mode, it's clear to see this has always been a game bereft of much in the way of ideas. In short: it's dull.

You waddle through a dark corridor, something jumps out at you so you shoot it with a gun that sounds like its barrel is muffled with cotton wool. Sometimes you use a computer. And that's it. There are no puzzles, there are no mazes to work out, there is so very little of interest, there is so much bathed in pure simplicity.

Now the simplicity angle is one we're fans of a lot of the time, but *Doom 3* – in all its three incarnations – doesn't back up its simplicity with satisfying mechanics, unrelenting enemies or even much of a challenge. Just to reiterate for those not listening: it's dull.

It's not *bad*, it's just mediocre. The HD treatment doesn't do much, but then the game hadn't exactly aged badly to begin with – it doesn't look amazing, but the atmosphere is solid and the game world believable. Combat settles into a familiar pace and one that can provide a nice, relaxing afternoon of play (in stark contrast to how terrifying we found it first time around: its scares haven't aged well), circle-strafing and mincing up demons with your chaingun until you decide to play something that actually involves your brain.

Fortunately, you don't have to go far for that: the *BFG Edition* includes both the original *Doom* and *Doom II*, from 1993 and 1994 respectively. These are the PC ports and not a conversion of the PSone version, meaning they're a bit different to what you got if you've only played that version. One thing it does mean though is that the first level has the original, amazing music. Great days.

The original two releases show up all three versions of *Doom 3* consistently: inventive, maze-based level design, enemies that overwhelm you rather than queue up to be killed, more than just monster closet scares (though still plenty of them) and a palpable feel of speed and excitement that just doesn't resonate with what is apparently the main attraction in this collection.

Ian Dransfield

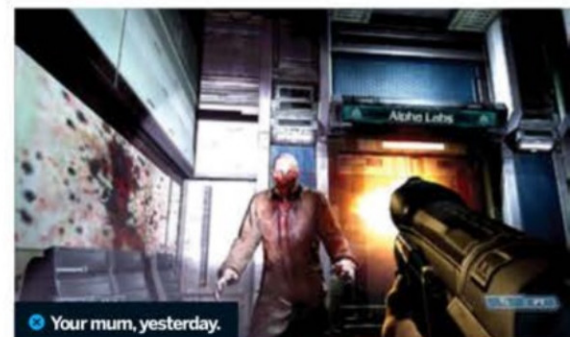
VERDICT

This is the first appearance of the original *Doom* and its sequel on PS3, and for that it's worth buying. It's a shame then that the main attraction – *Doom 3* in HD with its add-ons – is (still) such a let-down.

69%



This caused outrage in 1993. How quaint.



Your mum, yesterday.



FOUR DOWN, ONE SHOT. We never lost those skills.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

WWE 13

And that's the bottom of the barrel, 'cos Stone Cold said so

DETAILS

Publisher
THQ
Developer
Yuke's
Price
£49.99
Players
1-6
Genre
Sports
Age Rating
16+
Website
www.wwe.thq.com
Twitter
@WWEGames
Facebook
facebook.com/WWEGames



WWE is in a rut. *WWE 13* is the perfect example of this fact. The only real forward steps this year's entry to the wrasslin' series has taken are by going back to the Attitude era – that point between 1997 and 2002 when it was genuinely must-see TV – and recreating it, blow for blow, insult for insult, censored use of the term 'WWF' for censored use of the term 'WWF'.

Nostalgia is a powerful thing and, in the case of wrestling fans, a very powerful thing. So starved are they for something that's actually enjoyable to watch these days that they're certain to lap up the Attitude content, power through the hours of stuff it offers, hit every historical match condition (hit Vince with the chair when Dude Love ducks it, bliss!) and eat up the videos and photography from the era thrown their way. Stone Cold, Bret Hart, The Rock, Mankind, Kane before he got fat, the New Age Outlaws, British Bulldog, Ken Shamrock, even the Big Boss

Man: there are so many names here it can't help but bring a smile to the face of players of a certain age.

But the game behind it, cowering behind these personalities of yesteryear, is very similar to what came last year. All the talk of a Predator 2.0 engine just means it's a bit quicker and – unless you turn the on-screen prompts off – reversals are easier for fat-handed berks to pull off. Beyond that it's the same tweaked and iterated engine that has been in dire need of a factory recall and total reworking for the last... god, since *Smackdown vs Raw 2006*. Clipping is still a massive issue, with moves simply not registering contact *when they make contact* and other silly little foibles and problems that really shouldn't exist anymore. It's been years. There's no excuse.

Similarly, there's little rhyme or reason for character movesets being very similar across the board. The need to pad out what the performers

actually do is understood, but not every single *WWE Legend* used a gutbuster. They just didn't. It's lazy and smacks of a rush-job.

WWE is in a rut both on TV and in the videogame world, and all the nostalgia in the world can't fix that. Both products need a fundamental reinvention if they're to become anything other than an irrelevant side-attraction you can only sometimes be bothered with. Frankly, *WWE 14* needs its own Attitude era.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

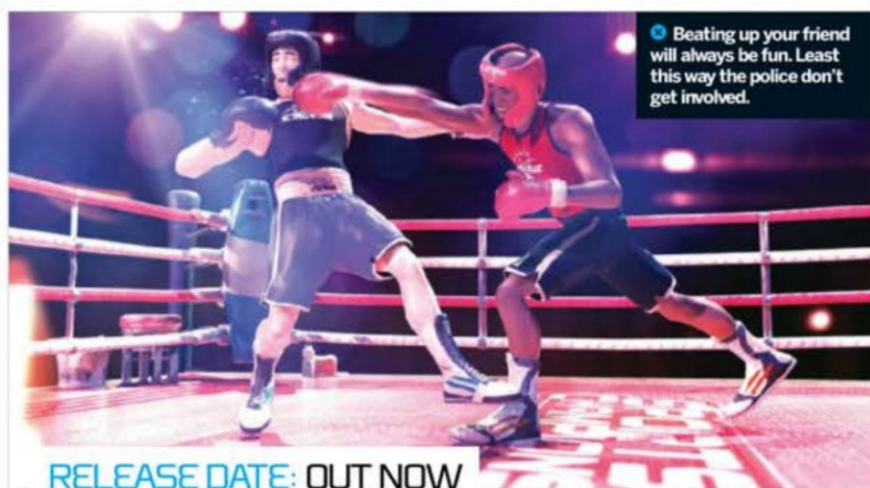
You'll notice this number is higher than that of *WWE 12*, even though we complain about a barely-evolved sequel here. Well, the power of nostalgia and the strength of the Attitude era combine nicely. Other than that? This is a pointless game.

55%

In this series



Fire Pro Wrestling Returns
Genuinely one of the best wrestling games ever made. US PS2 only, sorry.



Sports Champions 2



Glowing pink and blue balls: the sign of a champion



Publisher Sony Developer San Diego Studio Price £20.99
Players 1-2 Genre Sports Age Rating 3 Website uk.playstation.com/sportschampions2 Twitter @PlayStation Facebook www.facebook.com/PlayStation

Oh dear, Sony. Whatever happened to Move? Did you want it to fizzle out? Was it a stopgap to try and prevent Microsoft's Kinect from succeeding? A joke that no-one realised until it was too late? Who knows.

Either way, *Sports Champions* is the victim in this. The original was... well, *fine*. It was a tech demo that proved how precise Move could be and, despite the limited content, could be a lot of fun in the right circumstances. *Sports Champions 2* is much the same, but with a whole new selection of issues.

There's only one returning event – Archery – though a couple of others bear uncanny resemblances to previous ones. Bowling, for example, is a big boy version of bocce, while tennis replaces its diminutive form, table tennis.

They're lesser versions, however. Archery no longer requires drawing the 'string' to aim, and can even be exploited so you don't even need to reach behind to grab an arrow. Tennis, meanwhile, restricts you to shot types as chosen by the game, and though you can add

lob or power shots with ease, the lack of movement suggests they should've just stuck with table tennis.

The new sports in the form of boxing, skiing and golf aren't exactly perfect either. Boxing results in mindless flailing, skiing is just dull and golf – well, golf is golf. The result is a limited set of mini-games that don't seem to have had any thought put into them.

Adam Barnes

VERDICT

The lack of content is represented in the price: this is a low-cost game. Pick it up if you're a regular user of Move perhaps, but then that's just a clever way of saying you really shouldn't bother at all.

65%



Okami HD

The best-looking game on PS2 becomes the best-looking game on PS3

Publisher Capcom Developer Clover Studio/Hexa Drive Price £15.99 Players 1
Genre Action adventure Age Rating 12+ Website www.okami-game.com
Twitter @Capcom_UK Facebook www.facebook.com/capcommunity



Okami was destined to break our hearts. Dumped onto shelves

late in the PS2 life cycle as its internal Capcom developer, Clover Studio, was closed down, *Okami*'s mixture of *Zelda*-style adventuring and a distinctive watercolour style was always the ideal combination for ensuring cult hit status. This PS3 HD re-release is a tribute to that dedicated group of people – it's absolutely the perfect version of *Okami*, presented in such a technically refined way that it elevates the original product.

You play the sun god Amaterasu, essentially a doggy that runs around with fire scorching on its back. Most of the gameplay is centred on a painting mechanic, where you draw objects onto the screen in order to affect the environment or other characters – for example, drawing a bomb that appears before exploding, or drawing a circle in the sky to create a sun. It's a deep,

The perfect version of *Okami*, presented in such a technically refined way that it elevates the original product

beautiful system that keeps *Okami* highly playable even when it succumbs to repetition, which is especially noticeable in the final third of the game, and as a bonus you can use the Move controller to paint these objects onto the screen.

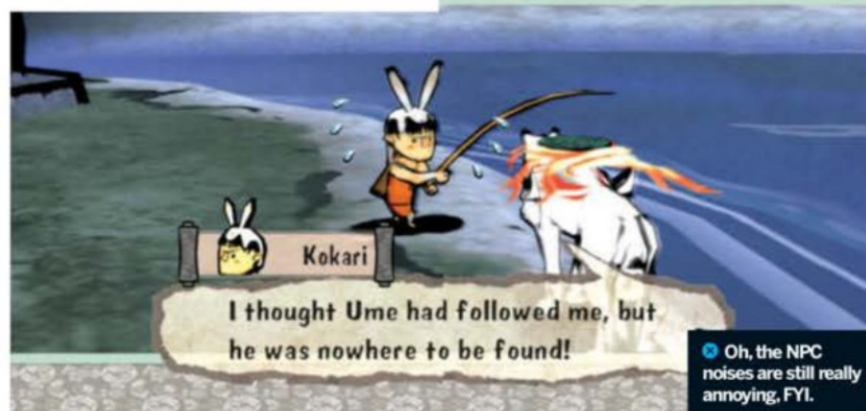
More than that, though, *Okami* presents the most extraordinary world to inhabit, one that constantly gives in terms of visual flourishes and atmosphere. Between this and *God Hand*, you can now own Clover's magna opera on PS3 – apart from *Viewtiful Joe*, of course. Do that next, Capcom.

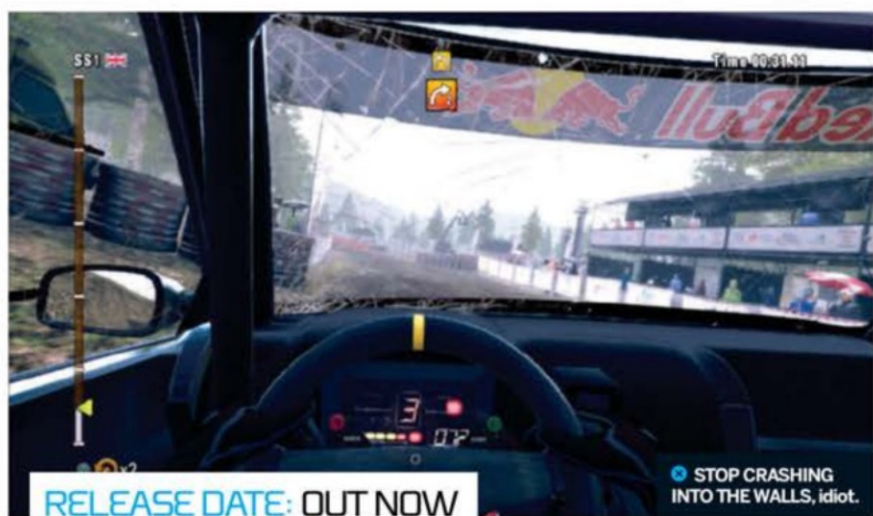
Samuel Roberts

VERDICT

Okami is lovely, just as we remember it, and has been given a treatment that takes it far beyond the muffled visual quality of the PS2 original. The version that both fans and newcomers must own.

90%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

STOP CRASHING INTO THE WALLS, idiot.

WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship

It's the most predictable time of the year



Publisher Black Bean Games Developer Milestone S.r.l.
Price £39.99 Players 1-16 Genre Racing Age Rating 3+ Website
www.wrc3game.com Twitter @WRC3TheGame Facebook
facebook.com/WRC3TheGame

So it's that time of the year again, where we look at a pretty good rally game, see it's almost the same as before then say 'If you want an alternative to *DiRT*, this is a decent option' and slap 74% on the end of it.

It's an interesting part of the year, full of tradition for many of us and marking the changing of the seasons – oftentimes the changing of the guard, too. In having slightly better looking Citroens and Peugots flying around Wales and Finland at speeds your older brother used to drive down country lanes just to terrify you as a youth, we find some semblance of comfort; a balance offered for a world gone awry.

But that balance, just like everything else that ever has been or will be, doesn't last forever. Rogue elements are thrown into the mix, like nutmeg into mashed potato, to try and add excitement to a satisfying yet ultimately uninteresting

dish. The nutmeg here is Road To Glory, where stages break away from the traditional rallying and special stage cream and butter and throw in the ground up seed of shorter stages and objectives like survival or smashing through targets. It makes something familiar and dull that bit more delicious.

But ultimately, *WRC 3* is still mashed potatoes: it's solid, filling and reliable, but even with a dash of nutmeg it's still just mash. Maybe next year we'll get gravy.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

A reliable, simple comfort food that pops up to remind you it's okay to have something a bit dull in your life every now and then. Just don't have too much nutmeg: in its unprocessed form it can have psychoactive effects.

74%



FIVE RIGHT where you'll find bangers to accompany your mash.



You get a couple of hours for your money.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Unfinished Swan

A more finished review



Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Giant Sparrow
Price £9.99 Players 1 Genre Adventure Age Rating 3+ Website
giantssparrow.com/games/swan Twitter @giantssparrow
Facebook facebook.com/pages/Giant-Sparrow/53185307047

Magic and wonder and cooing and gleeful smiles and paint-lobbing and scary spiders and genuinely funny storytelling and stark beauty and being a bit weird and a bit more lobbing of things that aren't quite paint and, yep, that's *The Unfinished Swan*.

It's exactly the sort of game you'd want to see on PSN, offering a light-hearted distraction from the timesinks of *Dishonored*, *Skyrim*, *Mass Effect*, *COD*, *Battlefield* and so on. It's nice to be able to stop shooting people and instead start throwing paint into a seemingly empty world, slowly revealing the surroundings as you make your way to try and find your absent mother – and follow the titular swan (note: it's missing part of its neck, hence the 'unfinished' bit).

Paint, water, light, more paint: there's a fair mix of things to do over the couple of hours it takes to finish, and there's little more challenge than maybe having to find just where you're supposed to be lobbing your stuff at. But it's fun. It's beautiful and engaging. It hits all the notes it sets out to hit.

But if you're looking for a game to last you forever and a day, to compete

with the likes of those massive triple-As, dock a fair few points from this score. If you don't mind that you only get a couple of hours for your money – and, importantly, that these couple of hours are a lot of fun – then, well, leave the score as it is. Obviously.

Ian Dransfield

It's stark, but beautiful.



VERDICT

A brief, sweet experience made all the better by its unique presentation and interesting mechanics. It doesn't last long and it's not much of a challenge, but there's little else around that can evoke such a sense of wonder and joy from those playing it.

78%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Silent Hill: Book Of Memories



Why don't you just die already!?



Publisher Konami Developer WayForward Technologies
Price £24.99 Players 1-4 Genre Survival-horror Age Rating 15
Website www.konami.com/games/silenthillborn Twitter @Konami
Facebook www.facebook.com/SilentHill

Konami doesn't know what it's doing with *Silent Hill*. That much has been pretty clear since Team Silent dismantled following the fourth entry, and the publisher proceeded to play franchise hot potato between Western developers ever since.

Now the misshapen starchy lump has landed in the palms of WayForward Technologies, a foremost handheld developer that imagines the bleak surroundings of *Silent Hill* as a cryptic maze cut into tiny digestible chunks. But while *Book Of Memories* does explore some genuinely interesting creative avenues – multiplayer, combat boosts based on morality – it far too often relies on franchise clichés that wore thin four games ago.

So we follow some preppy twenty-something who finds the mysterious *Book Of Memories* detailing every moment of his life. After rewriting some passages, he enters some nightmarish corner of *Silent Hill* and explores all of his life's miserable injustices – like that time someone else got a promotion at work, or his girlfriend troubles.

You know, real nightmare fuel here. Roaming around each chapter's nexus-like structure of interconnecting rooms in the hunt for puzzle pieces soon becomes a chore, and the lack of enemy variation or analogous significance does little to break the monotonous routine.

Every new pallid area feels identical to the last, a point exacerbated by the endless recycling of the same *one* puzzle at the close of each chapter. As a horror game it's devoid of scares, as a puzzle game it lacks any challenge and as a worthwhile purchase it simply lacks logic. *Silent Hill* has never been this unwelcoming.

David Scarborough

VERDICT

Half-baked mechanics, visually dull and a lack of conviction in its creative vision, when your puzzle game's most cerebral poser is 'hit X' to shoot, you know you've got problems. The curse of *Silent Hill* strikes again.

32%



PSN reviews



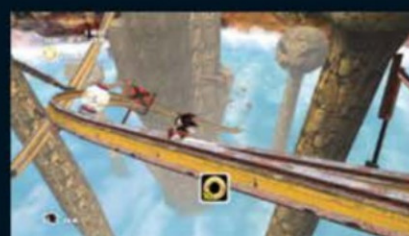
KILLZONE HD The 'Halo killer' returns

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer Guerrilla Games Price £11.99
Players 1 Genre First-person shooter



REMEMBER WHEN EVERYONE was vaguely convinced that Sony had a *Halo* killer on its hands with *Killzone*? That was a case of marketing getting out of control, as *Killzone* seemed slightly too ambitious when it sidled up on PS2, a game that still feels like it pushed the boundaries of last gen in terms of technical fidelity. Sadly, it's aged in style more than anything else – the dull colours of *Killzone*'s many corridor-based levels have become the standard generic backdrop for modern FPS titles, and it's this lack of imagination in environmental design that take *Killzone* down a notch. A shame, really, as the original game was an otherwise solid experience.

65%



SONIC ADVENTURE 2

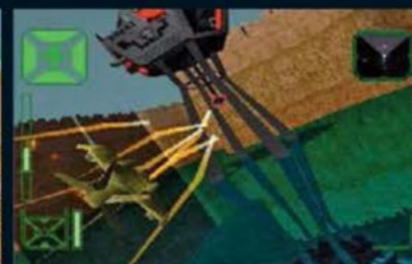
3D Sonic in not-awful shocker

Publisher Sega Developer Sonic Team Price £6.49 Players 1-2 Genre Platform



3D SONIC GAMES have a fairly negative reputation, forged in recent years from the lousy *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Sonic Unleashed* – but Sonic wasn't really that bad when he started out in the third dimension. Despite some spotty bits where you're forced to play as Sonic's increasingly arbitrary pals and sidekicks, there's a great slice of fast-paced 3D platforming to be found in *Sonic Adventure 2*. Though you're still better off picking up last year's underrated *Sonic Generations* as an overall tribute to the series, *Sonic Adventure 2* is still sharp when played in short bursts – imprecise at times, and slightly dated, but with flashes of classic *Sonic* genius that have blatantly been lost in recent times.

69%



WARHAWK Enjoy 17 years of progress instead

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer SingleTrac Price £3.99 Players 1
Genre Shoot-'em-up



FURIOUSLY HARD, THE original *Warhawk* is one of the many classic PSone titles that have been subsequently surpassed by modern games – in this case, an entry in its own series, the excellent *Starhawk*, which encompasses much of the flight-based combat you'll find here only with significant graphical panache. In fact, if you got the *Starhawk* online pass, you'll have got this for free anyway. It's a fairly basic-looking flight sim/shooter that's ludicrously hard, in the creative ballpark of something like the *Starfox* games on Nintendo consoles, only not as well-presented. As a series, however, *Warhawk* grew to creative strengths – pick up its PS3 brethren instead.

48%

8 REASONS PLAYSTATION PLUS IS ESSENTIAL

You might have overlooked it as a needless excess until now, but PS Plus has become utterly essential in recent months. Here's just eight reasons as to why.

FREE FULL GAMES

1 You pay £40, you get a load of full games to keep for the year. Then, if you pay £40 a year later, you get another year of those games. Technically they are free full games within the subscription system, but it's fair to point out *you have to subscribe to get them*.

But surely they're garbage masquerading as interesting freebies? *Red Dead Redemption*, *Bulletstorm*, *LittleBigPlanet 2*, *inFamous 2*, *Hell Yeah!*, *Shatter*, *Just Cause 2* and many others beg to differ. It is, quite frankly, an astonishing collection of free titles that has popped up since Sony started pushing the free full games angle.

For those working to a tight budget, it's actually a pretty damn fine deal, too. For less than the price of the RRP of a new game, you get a lot of games that are actually worth playing. It's almost ridiculous how good a feature it is, actually.

DISCOUNTS

2 Getting stuff for free is the dream, obviously, but getting stuff for cheaper is almost as good. Being a member of PS Plus allows you to get different amounts off different games, from the tiny discounts of ten per cent up to whopping amounts off – we're sure we saw a 90 per cent off once. Maybe it was a fever dream, who knows?

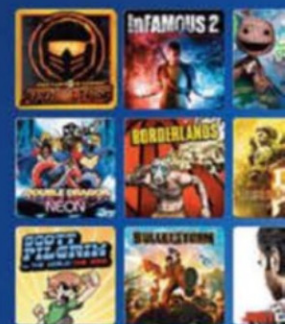
But the great(er) thing about discounts is how you get to keep what you buy. With the freebies, you're expected to re-up your subscription in order to keep the gifts. When you buy something – even at a discount – you don't get a Sony taskforce breaking in through your window once your sub has lapsed to rifle through your money-bag (we all have them) for the extra two quid or three euros. You get to keep it. You don't have to feel forced into keeping a sub, which is nice.



PlayStation®Plus YOUR INSTANT GAME COLLECTION

All these games available right now for **PlayStation®Plus** members.

Subscribe today for just **£39.99** per year



EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

3 We live in a golden world of early access and all the free chocolate-covered anythings we can lay our hands on, so we forget just how brilliant it can be to get your hands on something before most other people have. In short: it is brilliant. And PS Plus caters to that brilliantness quite... brilliantly.

Early access to demos and betas pops up regularly on the service, allowing you to play things like the *Uncharted 3* beta, *Dust 514* or *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale* before the proles get their paws on them. And other games, naturally. It's not just those three. That would be weird, and quite rubbish.

It's part of the brave new world we live in where demos and betas aren't just linked to the purchase of a full game you care about, but come with a reasonably-priced premium subscription model. And yes, that is a sentence we just wrote. In real life. On these pages.

AUTO UPDATES

4 This should be the number one selling point. Really, it should. Never mind the discounts, the freebies, the storage, the rentals, the fact you can get it cheaper, whatever else we've spouted at you: automatic updates are the best thing in the world. Ever. Yes, even better than that cake you had once.

You set it up to switch on your console at a time of your choosing – we go with something like 4am, as it's just after our usual bedtime (we're rock and roll and stay up late). The console switches itself on and begins a process of downloading patches for games you have, downloading items you have queued from the Store, uploading your saves to the cloud and syncing your trophies. It then, once finished (or after a certain amount of time) switches itself off. It's like Skynet, only more impressive.

It's also the biggest time-saver in the world and we love it.

PlayStation Plus



YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY FULL PRICE FOR THE SUB

7 One thing Sony doesn't advertise about PS Plus is the fact you don't actually have to pay £40 (or regional equivalent) for a year's subscription. As the service is purchased online, you use PS Store credit to purchase it.

Now here's the dirty secret: you can get Store credit for less money than it's actually worth. If you shop around online, on eBay, on numerous stores (check HotUKDeals and SavyGamer for pointers), you can get £20 of credit for £15, £50 of credit for £40 and so on. Well, not always that, but similar deals.

What this translates to, once you've dropped your forty notes on a subscription, is an overall cost of less than what you're actually being charged. It's maths, it makes sense. And it makes the whole experience of PS Plus that bit more essential. This feature was in no way brought to you by Sony Computer Entertainment, obviously.

IT'S ON VITA

8 All of these other things that apply – all of the good points and the things that make us happy and genuinely want to recommend PS Plus as a service worthy of your coin: it's all available on Vita too.

You don't pay a double-sub, you don't have to double sign up or double anything – as long as you're using the same account on your PS3 as on the Vita, you have Plus access on both.

This makes it even more tempting, especially for those unsure as to just what games are out there for Vita. It also helps with those who only have small memory card capacity, as you don't have to download all of the games at once – they'll be around as long as you've purchased them for free and your sub is active.

In fact, it's almost a reason in itself to buy a Vita. Bizarro.

CLOUD SAVE STORAGE

5 One member of **Play** had a rather catastrophic hard drive failure at the end of 2011. He lost everything, bar his synced trophies. If only he had access to cloud storage, which comes with PS Plus, he would have been saved. Granted, he did actually have access to it and a fully paid-up membership, but he's a fat useless idiot who doesn't take advantage of actual good features and we're glad he's buggered off.

Anyway, cloud storage means you can upload your saves to an off-site backup. This means you can easily transfer your progress between multiple consoles if you have them and that they are safe and stored away from your machine in the case of an event like that above. Think about it: it's not the end of the world to lose 120 hours progress on Skyrim, but it is *really annoying*. Take that irritation out of the equation with a PS Plus sub.

FULL GAME TRIALS

6 While we wait for Gaikai to get into full swing on PS3 – it'll happen soon, we're sure – we can rest easy with one of the lesser, but still good, features of PS Plus. Basically you can download a bunch of different games and play them for 60 minutes, totally free. Essentially you're renting it for an hour.

Though admittedly it takes a lot longer than an hour to download, usually. Your time limit doesn't start until you start playing it, obviously.

Anyway, this feature is offered on even more games than those offered for free, with the likes of *Mass Effect 3* available for pseudo-demo download. You play it, if you like it you can buy it and – if you do – your saves are compatible and any trophies you would have unlocked in the demo automatically drop. It's like a library, or something. Except the government isn't closing it down.



TOP TEN PSN RETRO



1 Metal Gear Solid



2 Resident Evil 2



3 God Hand



4 Final Fantasy IX



5 Streets Of Rage 2



6 The Secret Of Monkey Island



7 Driver



8 Final Fight: Double Impact



9 Sonic The Hedgehog 2



10 Crash Bandicoot

Turning point... after this point, things were never the same

Coincidentally, this is the last time we actually cared about WWE.



WWE Smackdown! Here Comes The Pain



• Release date November 2003 • Publisher THQ • Developer Yuke's
• Games it influenced WWE '13, UFC Undisputed 3, FIFA/PES series

THE YEARLY ARRIVAL of the latest in Yuke's long-running *Smackdown* series (now just 'WWE') got us a-thinkin', trying to remember a time we last genuinely enjoyed the series. Dreaming of the last time we sat down with it and played it for hours on end, taking our created superstar/monstrosity all the way to whatever gold we thought they were worthy of. 2003. Almost ten years ago. That was genuinely the last time we put *that much* time into a wrestling game. Since that day, everything changed – and not really for the better.

Here Comes The Pain still lives on in our memories and – with a recent replay of the game not too long ago – actually still lives up to most of our happy remembrances about it. Sure, it's aged graphically, the menus are hilariously poor and the speed at which it all plays out can be a bit disconcerting, but as a total package (unlike Lex Luger) it is still present and correct.

Best of all, the in-depth character creation and season modes are still brilliant, and we would say have had a fantastic influence on other sporting titles with regards to depth and presentation of these areas of games. No, really.

But why was this the turning point for the series? What went wrong? Well it would seem to be the same affliction that has blighted the *Pro Evo* series up until *PES 2013*: the jump to the PS3. Between generations something was lost – in the endless drive to make it look better, more realistic, sweatier, the focus on making an entertaining, technical and

playable game fell by the wayside somewhat. It's not like *Smackdown vs Raw* instantly went terrible, but it's been a gradual downward slide ever since *Here Comes The Pain*.

An emphasis on accessibility over any sort of technical play has rendered the grappling engine pretty much irrelevant. Wrestling fans say it a lot, but if Yuke's was to just rip off the old Aki engine it would be fine – that's almost what we had with *HCTP*. Steps have been taken and things are starting to turn back around again with *WWE '13*, but a combination of outdated mechanics and diminishing returns has left us with a moribund series; irrelevant as an actual satisfying gaming experience, but undoubtedly excellent in presentational and ability-to-sell areas.

But this near ten-year slide isn't the end of it. The series could always continue on the positive trajectory *WWE '13* has set and – as is always the case – just because the bad games exist doesn't mean the good games stop existing. You can still grab *Here Comes The Pain* for not very much money, and as long as you have a backwards compatible PS3 or PS2 lying around, you're all set. Oh, wrestling games. What hast thou dunst.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 110 • 94%

"Wrestling fans are catered for with the fantastic season mode but once again, it's *Here Comes The Pain*'s ability to reel in non-wrestling fans that make this an outstanding game."



Hulk Hogan! The Rock! Kurt Angle! (adopts Paul Heyman voice) BRRRRROCK LESNAR!

NEVER COMING TO PSN #12

Robot Alchemic Drive



- Release November 2002
- Developer Sandlot

THIS IS A game in which the player character controls one of three massive robots, which all sounds wonderful. Then you realise how *truly* wonderful it is when you see the names of said mecha: Vertical Fortress Vavel, Airborne Dominator Laguiole and Gilang the Castlekeep. That is, not to put too fine a point on it, amazing.

Sure, we could talk up how it's actually a pretty good game, how it has the Sandlot sensibilities of budget feel but satisfying mechanics (and gigantic things). We could lament the fact it never made it to Europe, instead only seeing a release in Japan and the US. We could cry so hard it gives us a hernia over the fact that no games these days have you wielding a remote controlled giant stompy robot.

But instead let's just focus on those names. Because they are names that will never die; names that will live on in our hearts forever. Names like Vavel, Laguiole and Gilang. And we will never see them on PSN. We wish we could.

WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT

Final Fight: Streetwise



"GUYS, WE NEED to sell more games to the adults who are buying videogames these days." "Okay, but how do we do that?" "Well, I've had an idea: let a 14-year-old who doesn't know anything about mature content or effective portrayals of violence design a new take on the *Final Fight* series!" "GIVE THIS MAN A PROMOTION."

And that's how the world ended. Well, it would have, had it actually ended. But no, the world stubbornly carried on like the bastard it is, and we ended up with *Final Fight: Streetwise*. We played it. We actually played it. And it stained our minds. Ruined them, some might say.

Not only is it one of the most pathetic attempts at a 'mature' game we've ever seen, single-handedly reinforcing the stereotype that all games are for absolute morons, it played like ass too. In fact, why the hell have we reminded ourselves that this exists? What purpose has this served apart from annoying us? Damn you, Capcom. Damn you all the stinking way to stinking hell.



PS2 CLASSICS REVIEW – HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE



Because life is sooooo wonderful when you have to get up early to milk a ruddy cow or prod a chicken

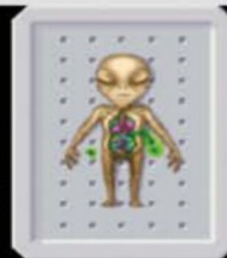


WE WAXED LYRICAL about one particular *Harvest Moon* game just the other month on these very pages, then the US Store went and got itself the PS2 version of *A Wonderful Life*. What are we supposed to say about that? Well: great. Mainly. Because it's one of the best *Harvest Moon* titles we've yet seen.

Okay, hush down the derisive laughter and general mockery thrown our way – we're cool hombres here at **Play**, riding our rad skateboards on the mean streets of Bournemouth and getting into scrapes and dating all the hot ladies like all the awesome dudes do – but *Harvest Moon* is great fun when it's done right. *A Wonderful Life* is done right.

Okay, so it's imperfect – it's not a perfect conversion from the GameCube original and it will not appeal if you hate farming (you *monster*). But those wanting some hot hoe action could do a lot worse – and it's fantastic to waste an hour or two on. Though it is only available on the US Store, so... that. Sorry. You can always set up an account and buy some dollar credits online. That's the most futuristic sentence we've ever written.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



X-Com: Enemy Unknown

Why bother with the original when the new version still takes up so much of our time? Why indeed. We still love you, 1995 original, but the 2012 game is just far too good for us to ignore.



X-Com: Terror From The Deep

True story: we first encountered this game in pirated form. 'Terror' was misspelled as 'Terra' on the disc. It still amuses us to this day. Oh yeah, and: piracy is bad and we didn't feel like playing this.



Civilization 2

We forgot this strategy classic had even come out on PSone, but it had, so we thought about finding it and booting it up and, and, and... and then we just didn't. Because who has the time these days?



Alpha Centauri

What do you mean we can't have this here on account of it never coming out on PlayStation? It would have added such a nice, poetic, rounded finish to this list. Instead now we'll just have to sneak it in unnoticed.

HOW TO SURVIVE IN XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

Can't get through a mission without losing a squad member in **XCOM: Enemy Unknown**? Take heed of these ten tips in base management and combat to make your battle against the alien invasion that little bit easier...

BASE MANAGEMENT TIPS



SATELLITES, SATELLITES, SATELLITES

Satellites are the single most important part of **XCOM**. More satellites in the air means more income, less panic and – if you get a blanket coverage over a continent – even special rewards. It's tempting to go for the cash incentive too, but be smart about your placement: using satellites can lower the panic in an area and that should take precedence. And remember: Interceptors should always accompany satellites; the cash flow is nice, but it's useless if UFOs can simply escape your grasp.



DEFENCE IS THE BEST FORM OF DEFENCE

Picking your research properly can be tricky but there's always one simple rule: go for defence. Those shiny new laser rifles might be tempting, so tempting, but as the tougher enemies appear you need to be able to take a lucky shot before you can deal one. Carapace armour is the first you'll come across, make sure you get that as early as you can. You can start researching it as soon as you pick up five Weapon Fragments, and you'll need Alloys and Elerium for later upgrades.



ENGINEERS OVER SCIENTISTS

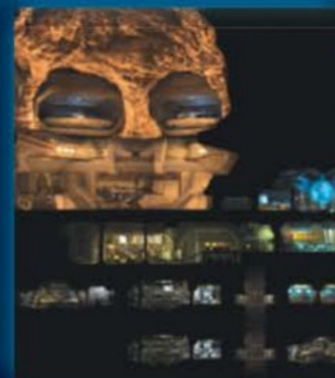
While research is important, if you're in two minds about whether to get more scientists or more engineers then we'd suggest the latter. The more engineers you have, the cheaper it'll become to buy satellites, weapons and armour. More scientists will lower the time it takes to research something, but a greater number are needed to have an impact. As long as you're smart about how you bolster both departments, you should have no issues: Workshops over Laboratories.

CAREFUL MANAGEMENT OF YOUR BASE IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE, PERHAPS EVEN MORE SO THAN THE MISSIONS THEMSELVES. FOLLOW THESE GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING INSTRUCTIONS AND YOU'LL SOON COME OUT ON TOP



BUILD AN OFFICERS' TRAINING HALL

Getting one of these in your base as early as possible will make future battles considerably easier. Building one enables you to purchase special upgrades with extra cash (which, if you've been paying attention and have enough satellites shouldn't be an issue anyway). The most important of these is increasing the squad size, first to five and then to six: it goes without saying that this will be a huge boon when defeating the alien invasion. After this, look to improve the speed with which your squad recovers from wounds, then increase the XP gained from battles.



BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU BUILD

Facility planning is extremely important. Sensible positioning of power generators or satellite uplinks will increase the extra power or number of available satellites provided by each building. Try to plan your structures ahead of their construction to avoid you having to pay to remove elements – look at the layout and decide where things should go, even down to the lower levels. Oh, and remember to keep an eye on the power consumption: Access Lifts use increasingly more 'bits' of power: bear that in mind so you don't need to delete existing buildings.



XCOM: Enemy Unknown



COMBAT TIPS

HOW YOU FARE IN BATTLE WILL DIRECTLY INFLUENCE HOW PANICKED THE WORLD IS AND, IN TURN, THE CONFIDENCE OF THE XCOM COUNCIL. WHILE IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE THE STRATEGIC DECISIONS YOURSELF, THESE GUIDELINES WILL HELP YOUR SQUAD SURVIVE A MISSION



TAKE OVERWATCH

Overwatch gives you an extra shot on an enemy that crosses the user's field of vision: it doesn't always hit, but it's useful all the same. Use this in tandem with careful squad-member 'bunny-hopping', moving from cover to cover slowly to avoid rushing into a group of Mutons. That being said, don't let Overwatch be your first action in a turn – move all your soldiers into position *first*, then put each into Overwatch only after the area is secure. You may trigger an enemy spawn, and you could regret having used a soldier's turn already.



KNOW YOUR SQUAD

It's important to know exactly what each class is capable of. Heavys are great for their Suppression ability, severely hampering an enemy's ability to move or attack; Assaults can make use of Run and Gun to get real close and blast them with their shotgun while the Support class can use the Smoke Grenade to cover weakened allies and increase their survivability. Snipers we'll get to separately, see point three. Once you unlock the fifth and sixth slots, knowing what extra class to add in is extremely important.



LEVEL UP YOUR SNIPERS

They're a little crap at first, we won't deny that, but once a Sniper learns Squad Sight they quickly become one of the most important soldiers to have around. This'll let them blast at enemies in the field of view of *other* soldiers, providing a shot is possible, and later upgrades – like Opportunist – will increase their destructibility. They won't have to brave the front lines either, making them even more likely to survive. They're most useful when you stick them on higher ground on in an area with a lot of open space: perfect for Squad Sight.



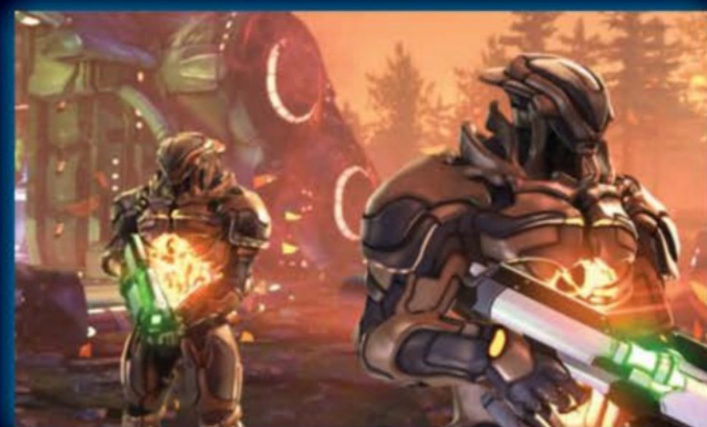
FLANK, BUT CAREFULLY

This is a tricky one. Spreading your units too far will make it hard to support each other – and worse of all, more likely to run into additional aliens – while sticking together makes it more likely that you'll be flanked yourself. Regardless, try to flank your enemy whenever you can (you'll know they're flanked when their shield icon turns yellow). It'll increase your chance to hit, and make it hard for the aliens to counteract your strategy. Just don't overextend yourself, you still need to be careful.



BURNING CARS

Unchecked, this is easily the biggest killer of squad-members. Hiding behind cars for cover often makes sense – sometimes it's the only option – but should a vehicle take too much damage, it'll catch on fire. Bad for humans. Make it your priority to move anyone in the area to a different location because, in one turn, that car will explode and kill anyone caught in the blast. It's a ticking time-bomb that, if you're concentrating on bringing down the alien scum, you may forget about entirely. Don't.



PLAY⁴ PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS SWITCH YOUR BRAIN OFF GAMES



top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Everybody's Golf: World Tour
- 2 Zen Pinball 2
- 3 PES 2013
- 4 Gran Turismo 5
- 5 Borderlands 2



top five SAM ROBERTS

- 1 Resident Evil 6
- 2 Batman: Arkham City
- 3 Red Dead Redemption
- 4 Gravity Rush
- 5 Uncharted: Golden Abyss



top five ANDY SALTER

- 1 Burnout Crash
- 2 Tekken 6
- 3 Worms 2: Armageddon
- 4 NBA Jam
- 5 Borderlands



top five REBECCA RICHARDS

- 1 Borderlands 2
- 2 Rock Band
- 3 Sleeping Dogs
- 4 Lego Star Wars
- 5 Asura's Wrath

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum is a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
Borderlands 2 is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%

game	issue	score
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz!: Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DIRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
DIRT 3	206	85%
DIRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Stealth has never been so satisfying as it is in Dishonored. One of 2012's finest. Do the game a favour and play it sneaky.		
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%

game	issue	score
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Dogma	218	48%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
Gl Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Dishonored PS3	92%	Worms Collection PS3	85%	Nights Into Dreams... PSN	75%
Madagascar 3 PS3	39%	XCOM: Enemy Unknown PS3	94%	Zen Pinball 2 PSN	90%
NBA 2K13 PS3	88%	New Little King's Story PSV	70%	Final Fantasy III PSP	44%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors PS3	69%	Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz PSV	78%		
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants PS3	54%	Double Dragon Neon PSN	37%		
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes PS3	55%	Grand Theft Auto III PSN	90%		
		inFamous Collection PSN	85%		

game	issue	score
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	163	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Arctic Games	222	40%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.		
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
LA Noire	206	91%
Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%

game	issue	score
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Anarchy (Import)	223	70%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Despite having an arguably disappointing ending, this BioWare RPG is still a must for any serious collection.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïf	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	217	53%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%

game	issue	score
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puma After Hours Athletes	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%

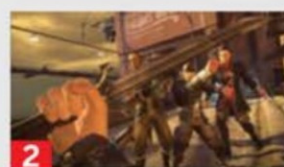
*denotes import review

TOP TEN SINGLE-PLAYER ONLY GAMES



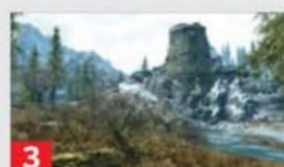
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Fallout 3



2

Dishonored



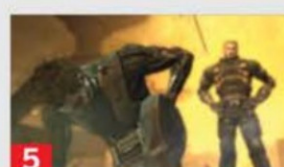
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The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim



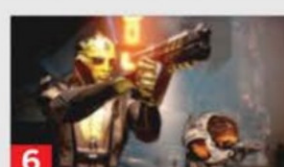
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Shadow Of The Colossus



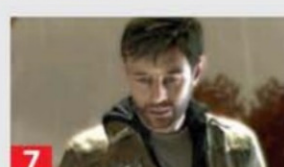
5

Deus Ex: Human Revolution



6

Mass Effect 2



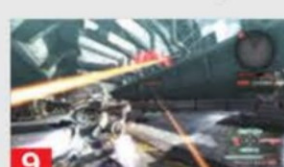
7

Heavy Rain



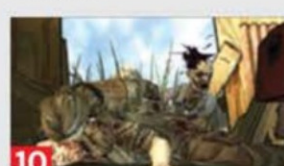
8

Batman: Arkham City



9

Vanquish



10

The Walking Dead

DOWNLOAD THESE ARCADE IN YOUR HOME EDITION



X-MEN ARCADE

60%, Play 203

Nostalgia isn't as powerful when a game comes back and slaps you in the face with its not-greatness. Still, *X-Men* is fine fun in four-player – for about half an hour. Just like the arcades back in the day, then.



CRAZY TAXI

80%, Play 200

This is more like it – you can always rely on Sega to make timeless arcade titles. Except this wasn't a great conversion, and it didn't have the arcade music, and... well, let's ignore the issues. It's fun.



VIRTUA FIGHTER 5: FINAL SHOWDOWN

90%, Play 220

Like we said, you can always rely on Sega. *VF5: FS* is one of the best fighting games on PS3 and takes us back to the heady days of those horrible, stinky, dank arcades where people would batter us repeatedly. And in the game.



STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE ONLINE EDITION

92%, Play 209

Remember when Capcom ran a service that didn't involve charging loads of optional extra amounts for things to make you play a bit longer, instead preferring to limit your play-time then demand more money out of you in the arcade? Oh wait.



AFTER BURNER CLIMAX

91%, Play 193

This is one of the best arcade games in recent memory (also: one of the only) and it is by – who else? – Sega. *Climax* is so stupid, over-the-top and fun, it's impossible for us not to recommend.

game	issue	score
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Hybrid	213	79%

game	issue	score
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA Euro 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	56%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
Worms Collection	224	85%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WSC REAL09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%

game	issue	score
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE '12	212	50%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yoostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion. XCOM is a phenomenal remaking of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.

PS VITA LISTING

A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

If the community is up to the task, LBP PS Vita's create mode has massive amounts of potential.

PS STORE LISTING

1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baoning	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%

game	issue	score
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubix HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
detuned	186	50%
Deus Ex	219	83%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
flOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Grand Theft Auto III	224	90%
 GTA III shuffles onto the slowly growing list of PSN classics, and still illustrates why Rockstar's original 3D take on the series was so influential.		
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
GTL Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%

game	issue	score
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperbolloid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%
inFamous Collection	224	85%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Nights Into Dreams...	224	75%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numbast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
 If you loved Portal 2, you'll love this. Swapping portals for dimension altering, it's the same mix of physics-based puzzles and humour.		

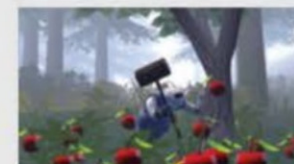
game	issue	score
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Rayman 3 HD	217	77%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
 One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.		
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
 The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.		
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead: Episode 1	219	89%
The Walking Dead Episode 2	221	90%
The Walking Dead: Episode 3	223	86%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%

PS3'S BEST GAMES MINI NINJAS 80%, PLAY 184

Don't laugh – we're being serious here. We gave *Mini Ninjas* a fantastic 80% back in the day and we stand by that, because it's a really good, fun little game. Stop sniggering – and you – hold those snide comments.



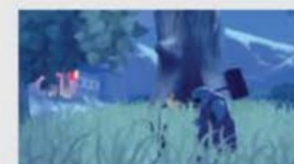
It's what IO went and did after *Hitman* and *Kane And Lynch*, which is pretty hilarious, and it's nothing at all like anyone expected. A silly little game for kids – with more than enough appeal for adults – based on cute little ("mini") ninjas.



A combat-heavy platformer, basically – not exactly something you haven't seen before, but definitely something you'd never expect to see coming from those violence-loving Danes who made characters like Agent 47 and... well, Kane and Lynch. Violence, grit, edginess? Nah. Small ninjas.



Plus it has one of the best characters on PS3 on the game in the shape of Tora – a character who legitimately and genuinely believes himself to be a tiger. Seriously – screw your harrowing, hard-boiled lead characters. Stick with ones who think they're animals instead.



You can probably bag *Mini Ninjas* for about a pound or something these days, and it's well worth a bash. Just as long as you aren't expecting *Hitman: Absolution* levels of super-violence. Just some tiny ninjas boshing each other with cute little weapons. Aww.

STUDIOS TO KEEP AN EYE ON



TARSIER STUDIOS

A relatively young studio formed in 2004 – and a small one too, with around 40 employees – Tarsier has made a splash for itself by handling a fair bit of *LittleBigPlanet* content. First a selection of DLC for *LBP2*, then co-developing the Vita incarnation. Not bad. The studio will next be working on *The City Of Metronome*, again with Sony's backing – we smell big things here.



UNITED FRONT GAMES

Not the smallest of studios nor the lowest of profile, Vancouver's United Front still gets overlooked by a lot of folks – at least that's what we gather from the chatter we have. It's strange, as the studio has made some fine games so far – and deserves a hell of a lot of credit for *Sleeping Dogs*, which by all rational thinking should have been rubbish. It wasn't.



PLAYSTATION C.A.M.P

Technically this isn't a development studio in the traditional sense – it's actually a search for new talent under the C.A.M.P umbrella: Creator Audition Mash-up Project. Anyone in Japan can try and get something made, so it's clearly a great idea. What have we had so far from it? *Tokyo Jungle*, of course. Brilliant.



ARKANE STUDIOS

It might surprise non-PC gamers to know Arkane has been around since 1999, but that's the way it is. The developers of the rather excellent *Dishonored* have a history and a pedigree – and it only makes the games it wants to make. The next title Arkane develops probably won't come out for five years, but as a result it'll probably be brilliant.

game	issue	score
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Wonder Boy In Monster Land	220	50%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
The finest pinball game we've seen in a long time, but in a newer, shinier, updated fashion. Yay pinball!		
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP LISTING



The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
The Con	153	59%
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
The Cube	153	64%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Fate/Extra	219	60%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%

game	issue	score
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy III	224	44%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
The Godfather: Mob Wars	136	66%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
MediEvil: Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixieJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%

game	issue	score
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCrois	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
The Sims 2	137	71%
Slim Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

*denotes import review



IAN DRANSFIELD

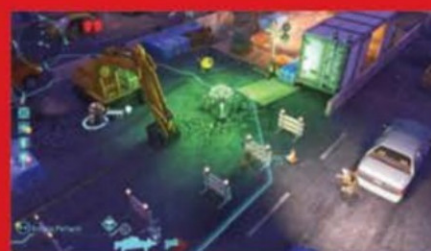
WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):
XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):
It's the best thing ever EVER.

HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW what I expected from this. Starbreeze, while making a good game in its own right, let me down with its remake of my 'other' favourite game ever – *Syndicate*. But this was different: this was a remake done properly, with a team at the helm that knew what it was doing and had clear, genuine passion for the project. "But surely," my horrible, cynical brain had to question, "they'll get it wrong and laugh in your face as you weep softly into a bowl you've had to go out and buy just to be able to catch your warm, salty tears in?"

Cynical brain was wrong. Cynical brain was so wrong it's had to rethink its entire outlook on life. Not only did Firaxis get *XCOM* right – it got *XCOM* right. It's the kind of game you'd never expect to be a full-price, mainstream console release. But it is. At the time I'm writing this it isn't actually out yet so I have no idea how it's done since going on sale. If there's any hope for this world, it will do brilliantly. Meaning it'll probably flop.

Oh *there you are*, cynical brain. I almost missed you. Almost.



PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

It's about a month until Christmas: time to get planning those... oh who cares let's play games



SAM ROBERTS

WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):
THE JAK AND DAXTER COLLECTION

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):
Why not? FACE.

I BLOODY LOVE *Jak And Daxter: The Precursor Legacy*, which in my mind was the perfect fusion of Nintendo-style design with the mechanics of Naughty Dog's *Crash Bandicoot*. It's also not bollocks-hard like *Jak II*, which is so offensively difficult that it cost me a PS3 controller early in this generation (you know, when PS3s could actually play such games). The *Jak HD Collection* is also the last title I purchased from the local Gamestation before it shut down. Actually, now that I think about it, that has almost no emotional resonance whatsoever: I just couldn't be bothered to order it online.

Anyway, despite owning a lot of these games already, I'm actually a massive fan of the HD Collection as a concept, providing the titles aren't a load of old ass (I could live without *Dragonball Z: Budokai* on my PS3, for example). Naughty Dog is simply one of my favourite developers on the planet, and *Jak* is one of those series that is utterly synonymous with PlayStation as a brand. Titles like *The Precursor Legacy* just aren't really made any more, unless you count Nintendo itself (which we don't, of course).

The structure of the original *Jak* title is one of its triumphs for me, though – that lack of urgency to complete everything just lets you live in the tropical, varied world in a way that allows you to absorb it. A great early PS2 game. Why not pick it up now?

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



Football

PLAY: PES 2013

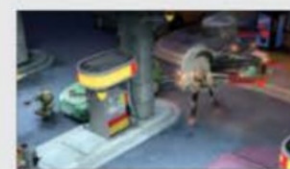
Explain: Do you want your football to be inherently videogamey? To be quick, flowing and accessible (though with an extra level of depth)? And you don't care about presentation or licences? Say hello to *PES 2013*.



Football

PLAY: FIFA 13

Explain: Do you want your football to be inherently simulationy? To be considered, slow-paced and technical (though with a definite accessibility)? And you love accurate presentation and licences? Say hello to *FIFA 13*.



Pausing for thought

PLAY: XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

Explain: There comes a time when the relentless onslaught of whatever bad bastard of the month it is becomes too much – you just want to stop and take a breath. You know what lets you do that? *XCOM* lets you do that. Bliss.



Remembering the Vita is actually good

PLAY: GRAVITY RUSH

Explain: Lots of people state the Vita has no good games. Coincidentally, these people: have never played *Gravity Rush*; don't own a Vita; are demonstrably moronic. Is it worth buying a system for? We'd say yes, actually. BOOM.



Terrorists win(ning)

PLAY: COUNTER-STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE

Explain: Of course, you can play on the side of the good guys if you want counter-terrorists to win, but we still love the voiceover of "terrorists win" more than the victory proclamation for the side of truth, law and justice.



MAX PAYNE 3



WHAT WE SAID

PLAY 219
"The continuing saga of everyone's favourite terrible cop has been a long time coming. Maybe too long. It's not bad by any means; there are moments of high-fiving, air-punching joy here. The trouble is it's both as eloquent and repetitive as its lead."

77%
87
out of 100
metacritic

WHAT OTHERS SAID

DID YOU ENJOY THE FAT, BALD ADVENTURES OF MAX PAYNE 3? WHAT WAS IT YOU LOVED? OR WHAT WAS IT YOU DIDN'T LOVE, IF YOU AVOIDED THE FAT BALDNESS?

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JAMES WARD I couldn't see why people didn't like it. I thought Max was fantastically cynical, bullet time was as pants-wettingly fun as last time and the story was actually mature. Ignore little niggles and it's definitely one of the greatest games of this generation.

KELLY BRADY I know it was meant to be grittier but I was disappointed.

PETER MARTIN Loved the first two but haven't played the third, looks awesome.

ROBERT MILES Rubbish and a disgrace to the once great franchise.

PAUL JONES Good. Great. Poor. hard, disappointing. Satisfying. A game of mixed result but ultimately forgettable. Once completed never played again.

TOM HIGHTON I thoroughly enjoyed it whilst playing but once I completed it but have no urge to play it again and I run through most games at least twice.

ALEX HURDING Pretty impressive.

GABBY WILLIAMS Very good, and the online was great, very unforgiving though.

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@DMANNING87 playing *Max Payne 3* was like watching a good movie for the second time in quick succession, still good but meh

@KID_DEADPOOL I work with a guy who looks like a pint sized version of Max Payne. Just needs the shirt & some shades

@DVLVEMUSIC "Gritty Bald Man vs The World"

@THESTEVEBURNIO TROLOLOLOL

@VIDYAVICTOR A good game but a few, but major, flaws hurt it. It didn't really feel like the other games, but I liked the new direction.

@FENIXII Just another mindless shooter that competes with *Resident Evil 6*, which has the best slow motion moments and rolls.... Pfft!

@DYLANHALT The perfect antidote to the cookie cutter FPS. Beautifully presented and proof positive that third-person is the ONLY way to play.

@GENERICBADGUY95 Technically it's incredible, it just didn't click with me for some reason



Post-Mortem

Far be it from us here at the magnificent and mighty **Play** to claim that maybe others were a bit blinded by Rockstar's (also magnificent and mighty) reputation, but... well, they probably were. *Max Payne 3* – it didn't set the world on fire like *LA Noire* and *Red Dead*. It was a fun romp – with, as we have to point out, incredible production values.

We received a bit of stick for our score at the time, which is understandable given the pedigree of both the series and the publisher behind it. But we stand by our score for two very good reasons: one, 77% is a *very good* score. No arguments – it just is. Two, we were right. *Max Payne 3* was good – very good – but it wasn't the be-all. It was bettered by other third-person shooters on PS3 (say, *Vanquish*, for example) and it will be bettered again this generation far too easily. Maybe not for marketing spend, maybe not for stunning good looks, maybe not for bald, fat protagonists – but it will be bettered.

All the same, would we recommend you play *Max Payne 3*? Of course we would – especially as you can now pick it up dirt cheap. It's absolutely worth of the esteemed series, which is still very high praise in our books.

PLAY

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Gaming For Over A Decade

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"The developers have masterfully adapted everything that made the original Painkiller so enjoyable to a new engine that looks fantastic and plays liquid smooth."

Machinima 8.5/10

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Destructoid.com - 8/10

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